

Enduring Emphases in Lutheran Worship

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Introduction

There are several reasons why a set of Pastors Institute lectures on the subject of worship is timely. Our pastors know that their people are asking questions about worship. For the first time in a long time in the Wisconsin Synod, worship has become a topic for dinner table banter, pot-luck conversations and cocktail party small talk. Worship is on the minds of WELS people these days and what is on their minds often enough gets onto their tongues. One of the catalysts for all this discussion is, of course, the *Sampler: New Hymns and Liturgy*, produced by our synod's Joint Hymnal Committee and published under the auspices of the Commission on Worship. In 1986 and 87, for the first time in some 45 years, the majority of our constituents saw and used a form of worship which they knew was intended to be more than just another "special service." The *Sampler* obligated them to analyze their attitudes about what they did in worship. It wasn't just the pastor anymore who called God "you"; now they had to put contemporary language onto their religious tongues. The *Sampler* forced them to wonder why they liked some new hymns and didn't like others, how they felt about singing the psalms and praying responsively, why they stood up here and sat down there and which book they were supposed to use when. What the Hymnal Committee produced after the *Sampler*, the proposed list of hymns to be included in the new hymnal and especially the roster of "dropped" hymns, led to even more questions. Our pastors are looking for help in answering those questions. Hopefully these essays will offer some assistance.

Our pastors also realize that their people are not all agreed when it comes to the subject of worship. Not a few WELS pastors are standing between two very vocal forces in their congregations, one which demands worship variety and another which detests it. Some of you know this better than I do! As the new hymnal nears completion the debate can only increase. There are no simple ways to bring these two factions together. In some cases there is no better solution than the ballot. But the vote is a legal not an evangelical mechanism, and, in an issue as sensitive as this one, it seldom affords a felicitous finale. Although the WELS grapevine suggests that a few of our pastors rode rather roughshod over sensitive consciences and a few more simply stuck their heads into the liturgical sand, the great majority of our brothers are looking for ways to lead their people to a common point of view. It is my prayer that these essays will help, even if only in a small way.

Besides these internal pressures, there are external forces which are also obligating WELS pastors to ask serious questions about worship. The liturgical decrees of the Second Vatican Council have had effects which have reached far beyond Roman Catholicism.

The three-year lectionary, the revised church calendar, the emphasis on contemporary language and the encouragement toward a secularized church music are all children of Vatican II. And even though the modern liturgical movement was born already in the century before, Vatican II adopted it, legitimized it and pushed it out into the Christian world with a paternal smile. The freestanding altar, the sanctuary lamp, the eucharistic prayer, even the greeting of peace are all very much with us. Our pastors find themselves asking the question, "Should they be?"

There are questions which come from exactly the opposite side of the liturgical spectrum which are just as pressing. While many experts consider Sunday worship to be the vital cog in church growth methodology, their definition of worship is far removed from the Roman Catholic ideal. The church growth orientation is Reformed and, together with the Evangelical mainstream, views the traditional worship forms of western Christianity as being detrimental to evangelism and outreach. David Luecke, LCMS pastor and professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, is one of many Lutheran leaders who share at least some of that point of view. Although he treats other matters besides worship in his recent book, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*, Luecke certainly makes it clear that he believes traditional principles of Lutheran worship are not doing

Lutheran growth any favors: "I think Lutherans shape and package their Gospel offering according to the felt needs of only a small segment of American society...Can Lutherans learn how to package their offering better?" (p. 72) Any WELS pastor who prays that more souls might believe and is determined to be "all things to all men"—and we pray all our pastors are such—is compelled to consider Luecke's and similar points of view seriously. There is evidence that many in Missouri and some of our own pastors as well have accepted these ideas and are incorporating them into the worship patterns of their congregations. The rest of us need to ask the question, "Should we, too?"

Despite our efforts at increasing Bible Class attendance and our commitment to counseling and visitation, it remains a fact of life that pastors minister to most of their people most of the time at corporate worship. More and more of our pastors are coming to the conclusion that they cannot afford to ignore what happens before and after the sermon. Many are determined to use every part of the one-hour Sunday experience to its fullest advantage. Ample evidence of this can be found in the hundreds (I'm convinced the numbers are that high) of self-styled worship orders which are being used on a regular basis in the congregations all around the country. These pastors have discovered that their forms are meeting needs which *The Lutheran Hymnal* could not. Many more of their brothers long to join them in this liturgical success story but hesitate because of a perceived (or real) lack of ability. Their question is simply, "How can I?"

The questions I have mentioned in the lines above are among those I hear being asked most often. Likely there are more. The questions deserve, in fact, demand answers. The new WELS hymnal, despite its long pregnancy, will be born and our pastors will have to carry it through an initiation rite. It can be assured that this will be a baptism by fire in some congregations. A lack of education here or an over-statement there will fan the fire into a conflagration which will not be extinguished quickly. The liturgical movement will not go away and has actually made inroads even in the anti-liturgical traditions of main-line Protestantism. On the other hand, the Evangelical success story continues to be exciting and refuses to allow any standpatism when it comes to the forms of worship. An over-reaction here or misguided zeal there has theological implications and even risks the gospel (Carlstadt, after all, meant well!). Finally, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans want to be fed when they come to church on Sunday morning. Their society has determined for them that their time is precious and they will not be content forever if they perceive two-thirds of their worship time to be boring, irrelevant or superfluous. These same Christians need to be fed, but it needs to be the Bread of Life they feed on. Forms of worship have no value if they conceal the Lord Jesus either by dulling formalism or mindless innovation. Therefore, the questions have to be answered.

Now that I've made an attempt to justify my standing up here, let me repeat that I hope to answer at least a few of your questions by means of these essays. When you consider the fact that the Word of God makes the huge point that the forms of worship lie within the freedom of the New Testament church, you can appreciate that the objective will be difficult to attain. The Lutheran Confessions have more lines on the subject of worship than the Scriptures do, but the majority of those lines insist that the forms of worship are free! There are precious few principles for us to follow. There are precedents, of course, and they bear weight when they are set by the likes of Luther and Walther, but precedents have no doctrinal standing. Therefore, much of what you read in the lines which follow will be the essayist's own point of view. Not many professors at confessional seminaries have the right of private opinion in their public teaching, but worship professors do! You will know by the end of these lectures if these opinions are in reality cemented in the principles laid down by the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; likely, so will I. If they are, then our new hymnal is being built on a good foundation, for the points of view I will share with you are those I also share with my brothers on the Joint Hymnal Committee and the Commission on Worship.

To gain these principles and viewpoints we have reached into the past. To put them to use we are applying them in the present. To preserve them we are planning for the future. They are Enduring Emphases in Lutheran Worship.

I. Lutheran Worship Is Evangelical

According to Luther himself, it was in 1514 and 1515 that he began to discover that the heart and soul of God's relationship with man was not to be found in the dictums of the medieval church but in the writings of St. Paul. By no means was the discovery immediate nor did it thoroughly cleanse Luther of his scholastic bent. But several strains were becoming clear to him. The true God was not a God Luther had to fear. The "righteousness of God" which had so terrified him in earlier years now brought him comfort, as he realized that this was a righteousness God extended to him through Christ by grace alone. The gospel was the vehicle through which God offered that grace and by which God created faith to believe it. Luther's works were not the cause of his salvation but the joyful response to it. It is obvious that, as these discoveries occurred one by one, Luther inevitably would challenge the cornerstone of Rome's false theology, the Mass and then her entire sacramental system.

In November and December of 1519 Luther prepared sermons on penance, baptism and the eucharist which indicate that he was beginning to apply what he had learned from Paul to the Lord's Supper. He followed these in the summer of 1520 with "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility" in which he only touched on the Supper. But it was in July of 1520 that Luther rediscovered a scriptural principle which stood at the very center of the corporate worship issue. His Pauline insight into the relationship which existed between God and man led him to write in "A Treatise on the New Testament, That Is, The Lord's Supper":

If man is to deal with God and receive anything from him, it must happen in this manner, not that man begins and lays the first stone, but that God alone—without any entreaty or desire of man—must first come and give him a promise. This Word of God is the beginning, the foundation, the rock, upon which afterward all works, words and thoughts of man must build. (*LW*, Vol 35, p. 82)

Luther was beginning to understand that the essence of going to mass was not giving but receiving. He also perceived that such was not the emphasis of his church: "I fear that they have made the mass into a good work, whereby they have thought to do a great service to Almighty God" (*LW* Vol 35, p. 93). This was his conclusion: "I think it is not fitting that we should make a good work or merit out of it [the Mass]. For a testament is not beneficium acceptum, sed datum, it does not take benefit from us, but brings benefit to us" (*LW* 35, p. 93). The studying and searching which accompanied each new publication led Luther to greater clarity and determination on the issue. By September he would produce "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church." In that writing he was no longer just fearing or thinking: "By far the most wicked abuse of all, in consequence of which there is no opinion more generally held or more firmly believed in the church today [is] this, that the mass is a good work and a sacrifice" (*Selected Writings of Martin Luther*, Vol I, p. 387).

The principle that the gathering of believers at worship is beneficium rather than sacrificium is accepted by WELS pastors almost without thought. But to establish this principle Luther had to gainsay 1000 years of the western church's liturgy and theology. It was the outstanding element in Rome's plan of salvation. It drilled into medieval church goers the idea that God was an angry God who demanded to be appeased. It presented itself as one of the chief good works by which righteousness could be gained. It involved an actual denial of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice on the cross. And it launched a whole set of additional atrocities: that grace could be gained ex opere operato, i.e., by simply doing or even seeing the Mass without any thought of faith; that the sacrifice could be purchased for spiritual gain by those who were not able to be present or for those who were dead; that only the priest could mediate between people and God. Luther's vehement denial of the Mass as sacrifice changed the concept of worship in Reformation lands, but it did not affect the teachings of Rome. Not 25 years of Luther's death the Council of Trent decreed:

If anyone says that a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God in the Mass...let him be anathema.

If anyone says that the sacrifice of the Mass is only one of praise and thanksgiving [This was Melancthon's contention in the Apology] or that it is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice

consummated on the Cross, but not one of propitiation; or that it is of profit to him alone who receives; or that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities: let him be anathema. (Session XXII, canons 1,3; quoted in *Liturgies of the Western Church* by Bard Thompson)

Although even Trent recognized that some abuses had to be eliminated, it retained intact Rome's central theme that corporate worship was sacrifice.

Luther's understanding of the purpose of corporate worship was based not only on his perception of the inter-dependency of grace, faith and Scripture, but also on New Testament injunctions and examples. He realized that the concept of corporate worship Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians and the Colossians presupposed that the primary purpose of the assembly was for instruction (1 Cor 14:26), teaching and admonition (Col 3:16). The writer to the Hebrews encouraged meeting together for the sake of encouragement (Heb 10:25). The believers immediately after Pentecost obviously were involved in public worship as "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:41). First century believers in many cases were imitating what they had learned from the synagogue's emphasis (cf. Luke 4) on instruction. Even the service of the Temple and Tabernacle was not designed by God primarily for sacrifice. God intended the entire Old Testament sacrificial system, as well as the Passover, to be an occasion for impressing upon the people the concept of mercy. Thus Luther, while rejecting 1000 years of worship history, reclaimed 2000 years of history which preceded the medieval concept and reestablished what God intended the corporate worship of his people to be.

It is difficult to know precisely when and where the church lost this evangelical principle. The earliest liturgies known to us, that of Justin's Rome, mentioned in his *First Apology* (155 AD) and the one Hippolytus prescribes in his *Apostolic Tradition* (ca 200 AD) give us no indication that apostolic doctrine had been lost. Hippolytus, in fact, was writing to defend the church against the vacillations of the Roman bishop Callistus. (Thompson, p. 13-14) Within 400 years, by the inauguration of Gregory I, the concept of mass as sacrifice was firmly in place. In the 9th century Paschasius Radbertus proposed the seeds of the doctrine of transubstantiation and Walafrid Strabo justified the celebration of mass without communicants. (Thompson, p. 42) The Fourth Lateran Council (1215 AD) dogmatized the entire claptrap.

A number of factors likely worked together in the years between Hippolytus and Gregory I to form the sacrificium concept. Even Paul had trouble ridding the New Testament church of its sacrificial proponents. The Judaizers were not easily silenced, not only because they worked among Jewish believers but also because the *opinio legis* exists even in believers. The early and strong emphasis on thanksgiving in the eucharistic liturgies perhaps proved to be a breeding ground for the idea. Although his forms are pure, already Hippolytus spent a good deal of time presenting offerings. Finally, for all of Rome's bluster about her place in the western church, she was hardly able to control the divergent liturgical customs which arose in the growing church. Given the communication limits of the medieval world, Rome wasn't even able to control divergent theologies. Unless her position was questioned, however, the church in Rome often found it easier to assimilate heresies than to burn heretics. It seems altogether feasible that the medieval church was pushed into the sacrificium abyss by eclectic theology fitting into a eucharistic emphasis, while all the time the *opinio legis* stood by and smiled.

By 1520 Luther understood that Rome's sacrificial system, however she had received it, was wrong and deadly. He firmly and thoroughly challenged it and pointed the church back to its evangelical roots. The principle was established, although the application would have to wait: in February of 1521 Luther was summoned to Worms to appear before the Diet and the Emperor. He made no effort to put his worship principles into practice until 1523 (at least as far as we know) and then only after fighting a battle against those who had applied his principles incorrectly and unlovingly. However, although he likely gave little thought to the actual forms of worship before 1523 the principles he enunciated in his liturgical writings (1523-1525) are the same as those he held to in 1520. Even a few quotations illustrate this.

When God's Word is not preached, one had better neither sing nor read, or even come together. (LW 53, p. 11)

Let everything be done so that the Word may have free course. (LW 53, p. 14)

Let us, therefore, repudiate everything that smacks of sacrifice, together with the entire canon and retain only that which is pure and holy, and so order our mass. (LW 53, p. 26)

By faith be free in your conscience toward God, but by love be bound to serve your neighbor's edification. (LW 53, p. 48)

The orders must serve for the promotion of faith and love and not to the detriment of faith. (LW 53, p. 90)

Luther was attacked roundly for his opinions on corporate worship, not only for what he proposed, but especially for what he denied. When Philip Melancthon picked up his pen in both the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, he wrote more lines defending Luther's denial than his proposals. Especially in the latter document Melancthon repeatedly wrote in a way similar to this:

Our opponents condemn us for teaching that human traditions do not merit the forgiveness of sins and they require so-called universal rites as necessary for salvation. Here Paul is our champion; everywhere he insists that these observances neither justify nor are necessary over and above the righteousness of faith. (Ap, XV, p. 49-50)

But in Article XXV of the Augsburg Confession, he mentioned the Lutheran determination to retain the Mass because it was beneficial for "the instruction of the people." In Article XV of the Apology he defended the use of the ancient rites because they "helped instruct the common folk."

We have exhausted the issue (and you as well) to make the point that there is no disagreement among the Scriptures, the Confessions and Luther concerning the essence and the cardinal function of the public gathering of God's people in worship. Lutheran worship means to proclaim the beneficium, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, Lutheran worship is evangelical.

This principle distinguishes Lutheran worship from the worship of all other Christian denominations. Such an assertion may seem to be an overstatement at first glance. The reforms of Vatican II, for instance, have given the gospel a greater role in the Mass. Roman Catholic worship manuals are full of encouragements to parish priests toward better reading, preaching and pre-worship instruction. In fact, they offer a great deal which Lutherans can use, especially when it comes to communication. But as to essence, the Mass is still sacrifice which offers benefit to the worshiper *ex opere operato*. While today's mass contains the gospel—and certainly more of it than ever before—its essential purpose is not to proclaim the beneficium but to offer a sacrifice.

One seems to be on less sturdy ground when the opinion is offered that the worship of the fundamentalists is not essentially evangelical. Although the term fundamentalist covers a broad area of denominational territory, fundamentalists invariably share a commitment to preaching. In fact, there is very little else in fundamental worship besides preaching, hymn singing—and an altar call. It is precisely here that fundamentalist worship loses its essentially evangelical character. It is rather revivalistic in purpose. Whether the setting is a baseball stadium, a white frame meeting house or a Grecian-revival church building, the fundamentalist worship assembly exists to elicit an immediate spiritual awakening, an on-the-spot decision for Christ. The fundamentalists proclaim the gospel, but their bottom line emphasis in worship is not the beneficium but the sacrificium.

Since it finds its roots in the fundamentalist/evangelical camp, the church growth movement tends to encourage a similar worship emphasis. Church growth proponents are more sophisticated than old-line revivalists (in fact many are Calvinists, not Arminians) and are a bit embarrassed by the fundamentalists' whoop-de-do conversion tactics. To their credit, church growth leaders find great value in corporate worship. C. Peter Wagner considers worship to be one of the three factors which are essential for church growth. (*Your Church Can Grow*, p. 97) He and other analysts share points of view which Lutheran pastors need to hear not

only for the sake of the unchurched, but for the church as well! Often as not, their insights are those liturgical scholars lack. Yet, not every church growth expert understands (or is willing to grant) that it is finally the gospel and that alone which truly converts the lost and edifies the church. I mentioned earlier the concern David Luecke has for the way Lutherans "package" the gospel. While this essayist agrees with any suggestion which encourages Lutherans to present the gospel with all the abilities God gives, there is a very real point at which the package becomes the essence and the proclamation incidental. The very fact that many church growth leaders feel comfortable serving both confessional and non-confessional denominations indicates that, at least to them, the method is more important than the Means of Grace. A case in point is Wagner's emphasis on worship as celebration:

When a lot of people come together, hungry to meet God, a special kind of worship can occur. That experience is what I want to call celebration...The great camp meetings of a century ago, Finney's revivals, Billy Graham crusades...—all these operated basically as celebrations.

Christians love to go to them. They are a lot of fun.

Some Sunday morning services in our churches are fun, too. Unfortunately, in a large number of our churches, the Sunday morning service is more like a funeral than a festival. There is nothing unauthentic about that kind of worship...But it is not the kind of experience that Christians are very enthusiastic about inviting their friends to. Why not admit it? It's no fun!

This is probably one reason why many churches have remained small over the years. (*Your Church Can Grow*, p. 98)

The method for "successful worship" can be fellowship rather than fun. Luecke sees "feelings of joy, love and fellowship" as almost equal to the Sacraments in having the power to foster a renewed faith (*Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*, p. 85) Larry Vogel, in an article entitled "Mission Across Cultures and Traditional Lutheran Cultus" understands that the church growth question "Did we please the people with what we did today?" is no different essentially from the Roman Catholic question "Did we please God with what we did today?" (*Concordia Journal*, May 1986, pp. 84-85) Both are competing views to the evangelical principle which always asks, "Did God come to us in the gospel today?"

The part of Protestantism which is neither part of fundamentalism nor much inclined to church growth mechanization is best characterized by its social action emphasis. These churches have little if any interest in gospel proclamation; what little remains in their worship forms is moralized in good Calvinistic style. The theologies which stand behind these forms always have tended to view worship in general and especially the reception of the Supper as divine obligations. Strangely, church members in these denominations tend either to completely disavow their traditional worship rites or to hang on them indefatigably—and with the same rationale: they want to do what's "right" in their worship. Larry Vogel comments: "It is certainly not an exclusive Roman Catholic error to center worship on sacrifice" (op. cit., p. 84). He adds in a footnote: "This attitude of worship is as present in the cultic practices of "social action churches" as it was in Tridentine Roman Catholicism."

The Apology speaks for the scriptures and for Lutheranism's evangelical worship principle when it says: "Thus God wishes Himself to be known, thus He wishes to be worshiped, that from Him we receive benefits, and receive them, too, because of His mercy, and not because of our merit" (*AP IV* p. 137). It was exactly that understanding which led Luther to see that first the Supper and finally the entire corporate worship function is not beneficium acceptum, sed datum. He also wrote: "It must also necessarily follow where faith and the word or promise of God decline or are neglected, that in their place there arise works and a false, presumptuous trust in them" (*LW*, 35, p. 92). Luther loved the newly-discovered doctrine of justification too much to allow that to happen. And so he arranged his examples of corporate worship services in such a way that the proclamation of the gospel was clearly their primary function. He did not ignore the people's sacrifice of praise, for that is an aspect of worship which cannot be lost, either. But in order to maintain the doctrine of justification by faith, the distinctive view of worship as Gottesdienst—God serving man with his grace—must continue to oppose the

ever-recurring view of worship as Verdienst—humanity's meritorious service to God. As Peter Brunner (*Worship In the Name of Jesus*, p. 126) puts it: "Worship as a service of God to the congregation" is the beating heart of Lutheranism.

The evangelical principle has deep implications for any pastor who is at the task of worship planning or revision. This is especially true when these pastors are members of a hymnal committee. The sixteen men who sit on our synod's Joint Hymnal Committee share a serious determination to maintain and encourage the evangelical principle in the worship forms they are suggesting for our new hymnal.

It should come as no surprise that this is true. What is somewhat surprising is the deep resentment many WELS members hold because of the changes the committee is suggesting, many of which are being offered precisely for the sake of the evangelical principle. The language issue is a case in point. When problems arose in a congregation over the introduction of the Sampler, the invariable cause was the new liturgy's contemporary language. We might have expected some problems in this area since "you's" were replacing "thee's" in forms which had been thoroughly committed to memory. However, the most strident chord which was struck by the batch of complaints was that contemporary language is somehow disrespectful to God and that God cannot be worshiped by means of anything but a formalized, religious language. While it is true that reactions of this sort are often emotional and not thought through with careful analysis, it is also true that many of our people seem to hold to the opinion that worship must be offered to God in certain forms to qualify as God-pleasing worship.

It was reported to me several years ago that a local WELS couple, both Roman Catholic converts, were disturbed by the Sampler's contemporary language because, as they insisted, "We will lose our traditions just like the Catholics lost theirs." These concerned Christians surely look to Jesus as their Savior, but it is likely that they have not totally repudiated their former concept of worship. The loss they and many Catholics mourn in Rome's departure from Tridentine customs is a worship which was purely and only sacrificial in character. What Catholics gained was at least a flicker of the gospel light. But as long as people hold to the impression that their Sunday morning experience is designed to give the right thing to God (i.e., the "rite" thing!) and not to receive the right thing, they will be loathe to abandon traditional worship forms.

There are surely more of these people in our congregations than we care to imagine, and we pastors do them no favors by failing to address the issue, lovingly but consistently, that Lutheran worship is not a matter of proper form but of clear proclamation. Not so long ago one of our pastors pleaded with me to urge the hymnal committee to return to Elizabethan language because people in his area were attracted to his church precisely because of what he called "the WELS commitment to traditionalism." I fear that this brother of ours is presenting a caricature of the Wisconsin Synod position; at least I hope it is a caricature! There is a great difference between conservatism in doctrine and traditionalism in form. The former is the heart and soul of the evangelical principle; God cannot give very well if his doctrine is proclaimed without purity. The latter opposes the evangelical principle if it either obfuscates the clarity of the gospel or becomes the Lutheran version of the canon of the Mass. We may surely hold to tradition, but we must hold to them for the sake of the evangelical principle.

There are similar warning signals, I think, in the letters people are writing in reaction to the Hymnal Committee's hymn lists. The consistent refrain of these letters is that the committee is dropping some hymns and failing to include others which are a part of what some people consider "that old-time religion." Two proposed "drops," "Nearer My God to Thee" and "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me" have elicited impassioned defense, as have a number of exclusions, e.g., "The Old Rugged Cross" and "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord." My mail has increased since I spoke ill of the hymn "Blessed Assurance" in a recent issue of *Focus on Worship*. One man wondered, "What's wrong with it? We love to sing it!" He added, "As far as bad hymns are concerned, the hymns by Martin Luther are the WORST in our hymnal." We'll grant that the fellow likely exaggerated for effect, but his strong convictions certainly indicate that he and others would like to be able to sing and feel good about it. When it becomes obvious that the Lutheran Church is not always enamored of these old favorites, the reaction is not usually "Why is this hymn not doctrinally appropriate for me?" but rather "This hymn is emotionally appropriate for me!" The point of view which holds that church music's obligation is to allow one to feel good about worship also attends the arguments of Christian Contemporary music advocates. In

both cases the concept is advanced that there needs to be more in corporate worship than the promises of God and faith which receives them. I want to say here that there is nothing intrinsically bad about music that stirs the heart. But the issue clearly is "gospel first—music second." The Hymnal Committee has searched for and found a few old and new favorites which carry a pure message, but many others had to be rejected. Teachers of worship (and pastors are surely among them) need to remind people that the first consideration also in selecting the songs of the church is text, not tune or setting, and that music is intended only to carry a scriptural text or concept to the heart. When music obscures the gospel or replaces it as that which primarily stirs the emotions, the evangelical principle is not served.

As long as the **opinio legis** remains a part of Christians, we pastors will have all the work we need or want to maintain this principle in our ways of worship. As long as our members come from various denominational backgrounds and tune in to various religious broadcasts, our work will be difficult. We have plenty to do without contributing to the problem ourselves. Certainly a lackadaisical recitation of the forms of worship or a formalistic tone of voice do nothing to discourage the conception that worship has occurred as long as the right forms have been employed. We may want to rethink our long-standing custom of facing the altar to speak the Words of Institution. Luther encouraged a free-standing altar precisely so that the Verba might be proclaimed to the congregation. We sons of Luther are wise to consider his advice. It is my opinion that we need to take care in the way we use confession as preparation for the Lord's Supper. Letters to the hymnal's project director leave a strong impression that not a few of our members view their pre-communion confession as the good work which makes them worthy to receive the "reward" of the Sacrament. It should not be surprising that the strong attachment of confession to communion has its roots in Pietism, not Orthodoxy. For exactly this reason the liturgy committee has decided not to offer a revision of *The Lutheran Hymnal's* pre-communion confessional service. The general confession, spoken at the beginning of the service before we either hear God's word or receive the pledge of his body and blood, is sufficient preparation, we feel. I also fear that too many law-centered reminders to attend the Lord's Supper make of the Sacrament, at least in the minds of some, a good work they offer to God. We need to examine any procedures which encourage such thinking, especially church discipline policies and (I shudder to hear this is being done among us) pledge cards for communion attendance.

The evangelical principle in Lutheran worship, so clearly understood by the apostles, so wonderfully rediscovered by Luther and so clearly summarized in the Lutheran Confessions, is wisely reconsidered by the churches of the 1990s. It is finally in corporate worship that most the of 417,000 members of the WELS receive their only weekly contact with the faith-empowering Means of Grace. It is in corporate worship that these thousands receive their primary motivation to be faithful stewards, eager evangelists, wise parents, loving spouses and devoted students of the word. This is a very timely reminder as our church body embarks on what has been called spiritual renewal. After a recent presentation in the Seminary's lecture series, Dr. Robert Kolb of Concordia College, St. Paul, remarked that any call to a new Lutheran piety (a term he prefers to spiritual renewal) must be centered on a return to one's baptism, on confession and absolution, and on Word and Sacrament. We were not able to agree with everything Dr. Kolb said in his post-lecture remarks, but we had no argument with the sentiments he expressed concerning growth in sanctification. Missouri's president, Ralph Bohlmann, carried the point a step farther in a recent issue of the *Lutheran Witness*:

Worship is central to growth and we dare not forget it. With all the attention we place on our efforts, our organizational know-how, our studies and surveys, let us never forget that the power by which God's people live and serve him is the power that comes through Word and Sacrament. If we want to grow in numbers, we must first and continually grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Growth occurs as we read, study, learn and inwardly digest the Word of God with its new and powerful story of the redeeming love of Christ. Through baptism, lived daily as we repent of our sins and cling to the forgiveness offered by Christ, we continue to be renewed and strengthened in our Christian faith and life. Through the body and blood of our Lord in his precious supper, our sins are forgiven and we are strengthened to love and serve him.

God's Word and Sacraments are not only means by which he forgives our sins, daily and richly, but the sources of God's power in and through us.

When congregations, like individual Christians, experience a lack of spiritual energy and enthusiasm, the reason may well lie in our neglect of the worship of God that centers in the joyful use and reception of his Word and Sacraments. Too often, our worship life has grown cold and we find ourselves spending more and more time on programs and less and less time in the Word. (*The Lutheran Witness*, February 15, 1987, p. 24)

Northwestern Publishing recently published a new book I think we all should read. Written by Harold L. Senkbeil, pastor at Elm Grove Lutheran Church in Elm Grove, it is entitled simply *Sanctification*. With cutting analyses and solid scriptural defense, he comes down squarely on the side of the evangelical principle in worship. His words bring this study to a close.

The Lutheran church has a rich legacy to offer in its worship. Here is reality, not symbolism. Here we have real contact with God; not as we come to him, but as he comes to us. He meets us in the proclamation of the Word.

Here the Son of God distributes his actual body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. Here the people of God gather to offer him their thanks, their praise and their prayers. This is the real thing.

It's time for a new initiative in worship. People are longing for God. Where are they going to find him? In the shifting sands of their inner life or on the solid rock of his gospel? How are they to offer him their thanks and praise? With trivial methods borrowed from the entertainment industry or in worship forms which focus on the praise of God's gracious glory? This is the kind of worship which lifts the heart while it exalts Christ. And this is what Lutheran worship does. (p. 182)

II. Lutheran Worship is Liturgical

Once he had rediscovered the doctrine of justification and reestablished the principle that corporate worship must proclaim that doctrine, Luther was loathe to take any step which would have allowed the tyrant sacrificium to raise its ugly head again. Without a doubt, it was that kind of thinking which discouraged him from proposing a new worship rite for the Lutheran churches. He wanted nothing to interfere with the beneficium, neither a form which obscured it nor a form which replaced it as the primary emphasis of worship. He concluded his German service with this strong injunction:

This or any other order shall be so used that whenever it becomes an abuse, it shall be straightway abolished and replaced by another...For the order must serve the promotion of faith and love and not be detrimental of faith. As soon as they fail to do this, they are invalid, dead and gone. (*LW* 53, p. 90)

Luther was also aware, already in 1522, of the weight his words carried in northern Germany. He understood, for example, that his return to the pulpit could put a stop to the liturgical anarchy which Carlstadt and Zwingli had been fomenting in Wittenberg ever since he had been hidden away at the Wartburg. Against the Elector's better judgment Luther left his hiding place and arrived at Wittenberg in enough time to begin a series of eight sermons which began on the First Sunday in Lent. Order was restored quickly and just as quickly Carlstadt and his comrades left town. Luther respected that kind of power and zealously qualified every liturgical suggestion he made with words similar to these: "We heartily beg, in the name of Christ, that if in time something better should be revealed to them [i.e., other Christians] they should tell us to be silent, so that by common effort we may aid the common cause" (*LW* 53, p. 20). Besides all this, Luther on principle would not violate the emphasis

on liberty which his hero St. Paul defended so strongly to the Colossians: "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with respect to a religious festival...These are a shadow of the things that are to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (Col 2:16).

Luther's careful defense of Christian liberty in the forms of worship is convincingly supported by the Lutheran Confessions. We could adduce many quotations at this point. One from the Apology and another from the Formula of Concord will do.

But just as the dissimilar length of day and night does not injure the unity of the Church, so we believe that the true unity of the Church is not injured by dissimilar rites instituted by men. (*AP*, VII and VIII: 33)

We unanimously believe, teach and confess that the ceremonies or church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word...are in and of themselves no divine worship nor even a part of it.

We believe, teach and confess that no Church should condemn another because one has less or more external ceremonies not commanded by God than the other. (*FC Epitome*, X, p. 329)

There were those in Luther's day and in the generation which followed him who would have preferred that the reformer and the Confessions stop at this point of freedom. Similar voices are holding sway in today's church. The freedom principle seems to match up exactly with the evangelical principle. When the essential question in corporate worship is this: "Did God come to us in the gospel today?" it seems that content is primary and form secondary. I wonder if it is an exaggeration to say that in today's WELS—and especially among its pastors—there is a rugged determination to defend the "forms that are free" concept. I can't see much else behind the liturgical period of the judges we find ourselves in today, i.e., "everyone doing as he sees fit."

A careful reading of Luther and the Confessions reveals that a determination to defend freedom which is too rugged is a caricature of the historic Lutheran position. Luther understood that too much freedom could obscure the gospel just as quickly as too little. Commenting on his paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer in his German service, he wrote:

I would like to ask that this paraphrase or admonition follow a prescribed wording or be formulated in a definite manner for the sake of the common people. We cannot have one do it one way today, and another, another way tomorrow, and let everybody parade his talents and confuse the people so that they can neither learn nor retain anything. (*LW* 53, p. 80)

To the Christians in Livonia he wrote:

For those who devise and ordain universal customs and orders get so wrapped up in them that they make them into dictatorial laws opposed to the freedom of faith. But those who ordain and establish nothing succeed only in creating as many factions as there are heads, to the detriment of Christian harmony. (*LW* 53, p. 46)

Luther was all for freedom, but not for disorder. By 1523 there were reports from all over Germany that the number of reformed rites was growing and that, often as not, confusion ensued. The fact is, he composed both his Latin and German services only after repeated requests to produce something which would bring uniformity.

In March of 1522 Luther became aware that some in Wittenberg were making prescriptive for worship New Testament practices which he understood were only examples. "Take eat" implied, for instance, that the communicant had to take the wafer into his own hands. Ulrich Zwingli would make similar assertions in Zurich two years later and insist that the altar be replaced by a table, according to New Testament custom. Luther knew that there were no Mosaic ordinances in the New Testament. His eventual suggestions were surely influenced by concerns in this area.

Then there was the problem with the enthusiasts. Luther may have joked about Thomas Muentzer swallowing the Holy Ghost, feathers and all, but he certainly understood how dangerous the heavenly prophets were. At the same time they refused to accept any of the traditional forms of Christian worship they claimed revelation from God and denied the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament. Luther saw in these anti-liturgical Schwaermer an actual loss of the Beneficium.

As early as 1522 Luther expressed concern that those who were following him were being considered sectarian and not simply reformed. He discouraged the use of the term "Lutheran" for that very reason. He insisted that the churches which followed his lead were teaching what true believers had always taught. In 1524 he wrote: "We teach nothing new. We teach what is old and what the apostles and all godly teachers have taught" (*What Luther Says*, p. 861). He continued to make that point to the end of his life. In one of his last sermons he said, "We can prove that our faith is not new and of unknown origin, but that it is the oldest faith of all, which began and continued from the beginning of the world" (*What Luther Says*, p. 860).

While he was insisting that the forms of worship were the free choice of every Christian congregation, all these other concerns were weighing on Luther's mind at the same time. He understood that the sacrificium concept of the mass had to be overcome and he hesitated to replace one set-in-concrete rite with another. But disorder had to be conquered, too. Not even the perception could be allowed that New Testament forms of worship were somehow prescriptive for the 16th century church. Whatever forms were employed, Word and sacrament had to be clearly in the foreground. And the understanding that the church of the Reformation was nothing else but the continuity of the one, holy, Christian Church had to be retained.

One last factor molded Luther's thinking in the early 1520s. It was not a concern so much as it was part of his character. Luther valued the legacy he had received from western civilization and he had a sense of artistic propriety and appreciation. He considered it improper, for instance, to force rough German words into the flowing Gregorian chants of the historic liturgy. He would not produce a German service until he had an opportunity to consult with the best musical minds (both Lutheran and Catholic!) in Europe. He was loathe to lose the Latin language and strongly urged that the children learn it. He understood that the same Paul who had championed the doctrine of justification by faith alone and who would allow no other gospel to replace the one he had received from God had also encouraged: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent and praiseworthy—think about such things." (Phil 4:8-9)

Where did all of these concerns lead Luther? Let him answer.

It is not now nor ever has been our intention to abolish the liturgical service of God completely, but rather to purify the one that is now in use from the wretched accretions which corrupt it and to point out an evangelical use. (*LW 53*, p. 20)

Luther understood that the outline and the basic elements of the Roman rite had their roots in the seedbed of the western church and were pure; only medieval additions like the Canon—"that abominable concoction drawn from everyone's sewer and cesspool" (*LW 53*, p. 21)—had polluted it. He was not about to abandon the pure for the sake of the impure.

The service now in common use everywhere goes back to genuine Christian beginnings, as does the office of preaching. But as the later has been perverted by the spiritual tyrants, so the former has been corrupted by the hypocrites. As we do not on that account abolish the office of preaching but aim to restore it again to its right and proper place, so it is not our intention to do away with the service, but to restore it again to its rightful use. (*LW 53*, p. 11)

Besides, if his reformed church was, as he believed, the continuity of the "one, holy, Christian and apostolic church," Lutheranism had a right to the ancient liturgy. In fact, the use of that order was a public confession of the same. Given his concerns that the new church was being perceived as just another sect, the choice of the

historic rite was a natural for Luther. The use of the ancient service was also a witness to the voices which insisted that only those forms could be used which were specifically mentioned in the New Testament. Luther aimed a sharp arrow toward Zurich when he opened his Augustinian breviary and began to copy the ancient mass elements for use in the Lutheran church!

It is obvious that Luther felt the existing service proclaimed the gospel more than adequately. He commended the church fathers for their selection of the introit psalms, the kyrie, the epistle and gospel lessons, the hymn "Gloria in Excelsis," the graduals and alleluias, the Nicene Creed, the Sanctus, the Agnus Dei and the collects. While he wondered if some "lover of works" had chosen the epistle selections for the ancient church, he was satisfied that the church year lessons were witnessing to the gospel. He encouraged pastors to preach on them to ward off any temptation to "preach his own ideas" (*LW 53*, p. 78).

The historic service was the antidote Luther needed to fight against the subjectivism of the enthusiasts. There was little opportunity for "feeling" in the ancient rite. By Word and sacrament the service testified objectively to the promises of God. In his German Mass Luther mentioned his desire for another worship service besides the Latin and German rites. These were to be informal; people could gather in a house "to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament." He abandoned the dream because, as he wrote: "I have not yet the people for it, nor do I see many who want it" (*LW 53*, p. 64). I won't be surprised if I find out in heaven that it was Luther's fear of enthusiasts gathering in formless worship assemblies which deterred him in this endeavor just as much as the lack of willing people. The point has been made already that Luther's worship principle (as well as his theology!) excluded any replacement for the gospel, be that meritorious sacrifice or subjective feelings. In a sermon on 1 Corinthians 15, he wrote:

If you are not ready to believe that the Word is worth more than all you see or feel, then reason has blinded faith. So the resurrection of the dead is something that must be believed. I do not feel the resurrection of Christ but the Word affirms it...So we must not be guided by our own feelings but by the Word. (quoted in Adolf Koeberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, p. 79)

It was in this ancient liturgy, in the church year and in the sacrament that Luther found the cold, clear facts which pointed to Christ and these were what he was determined to employ for Lutherans at worship.

To gain from Luther that, in worship, any form will do, I submit, is to misread Luther. He did not make liturgical decisions or write his liturgical orders in a vacuum. As we have noted, pressing concerns led him to the historic rite, its church year and its emphasis on the sacrament, concerns which had to do with the essentials of his theological point of view. Werner Elert notes about Luther:

No matter how strongly he emphasizes the Christian freedom in connection with the forms of this rite, no matter how much he deviates from the form handed down at the end of the Middle Ages, no matter how earnestly he warns against the belief that external customs could commend us to God, still there are certain ceremonial elements that he, too, regards as indispensable. (*The Structure of Lutheranism*, p. 325)

These words of Luther should become as well known to us as his words about freedom: "When you hold mass, sing and read uniformly, according to a common order—the same in one place as in another—because you see that the people want and need it and you wish to edify rather than confuse them" (*LW 53*, p. 48). It stands to reason that both the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, written within six years of Luther's liturgical innovations, should echo his attitudes toward the historic forms of worship. It must be added that the Confessions' opinion was not more capricious than was Luther's; the concerns that led Luther to his opinion were surely also shared by the subscribers to the Confessions. The upshot of their theological concerns led them to agree that:

The Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest reverence. Almost all the customary ceremonies are also retained. (AC XXIV: 1-3)

Since, therefore, the Mass among us is supported by the example of the church as seen from the Scriptures and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disproved, especially since the customary public ceremonies are for the most part retained. (AC XXIV: 40)

So in our churches we willingly observe the order of the mass, the Lord's day, and the other important feast days. With a very thankful spirit cherish the useful and ancient ordinances. (AP VII & VIII: 33)

We can truthfully claim that in our churches the public liturgy is more decent than in theirs. (AP XV: 38-40)

The use of the rite of the western church, the historic church calendar, the regular provision for the sacrament, these were what Luther and the Confessions chose, in freedom but for good reasons, for the worship life of the Lutheran church. Since the ancient liturgy was built around the church year and included provision for the sacrament we have come to describe this kind of worship with the term "liturgical." With this definition, it may be said that Luther himself gave impetus to the principle that Lutheran worship is liturgical. "For among Christians," Luther wrote, "the whole service should center on Word and sacrament" (LW 53, p. 90).

Luther's desire for a common worship order in the reformed lands was never achieved. As you know, there was no central ecclesiastical structure in 16th century Germany. For that matter, there was no central government, either. Liturgical unity was often attained only within the borders of a specific province, and then usually by governmental decree and according to the prince's personal religious sense. Since there was not always precise theological agreement from province to province, there was not liturgical conformity, either. Keep in mind that Luther did compose two services, the *Formula Missae* and the *Deutsche Messe*. Even though both are truly liturgical (as I have defined the term), the orders are different and we see some provinces adopting the Latin fullness and others the German simplicity, again with the result of little conformity. In many cases the worship orders were drawn up by theologians and appended to the end of the provincial Kirchenordnung. Knowing Lutheran theologians, we would expect these liturgies to be richly doctrinal, and they are. We would also expect each one to be a little different, and they are that, too! Finally, Luther's own reluctance to violate the freedom principle bears some of the responsibility for the variety.

In all this diversity, however, the worship forms of Lutherland bear the clear stamp "liturgical." Unless the doctrine of the province had been compromised by revitalized Catholicism or encroaching Calvinism, the emphases in worship remained the ancient liturgy, the church year and the regular use of the sacrament. The minor dissimilarities in the orders of the Kirchenordnungen pale by comparison with their similarities in these emphases. Leonhard Fendt, a noted expert on 16th century liturgies, is quoted by Luther Reed to maintain the point that these emphases were not retained by the German churches simply for the sake of tradition but because they were "expressions of pure Christian faith and devotion" (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 108). "Nowhere does the pulse of the Reformation beat so warmly as in its worship," Fendt wrote. "Worship is the body in which Luther's spirit entered into the life of the people" (op. cit., p. 107).

This liturgical worship flourished in Germany for a hundred years and more. Within its parameters great Lutheran artists crafted masterpieces—men like Nicolai, Crueger, Gerhardt and Bach. Thousands of prayers, hymns and choral works were added to enrich the historic services of the church. Many examples of these are considered still today, by Lutherans and non-Lutherans alike, to be among the richest contributions of Protestant Europe. It was during this same time period that the great Lutheran dogmaticians --men like Chemnitz, Quenstedt and Gerhard—sharpened their theological pencils and carefully set down the intricacies of Biblical and Lutheran theology. Luther's principle, that Lutheran worship is liturgical, and the worship life that principle fostered, was responsible, at least in part, for creating a setting in which devotion, theology and art could flourish. It should not go unnoticed that, while Lutheran liturgical worship was at its pinnacle in Germany, the German Lutheran church was undoubtedly enjoying its golden age.

What hurried the end of both that golden age and the demise of liturgical worship in Germany were the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and Pietism. By far the more significant of these was Pietism, but the war created an environment in which Pietism flourished.

Already before 1618 many in Lutheran circles were reacting with more than a little interest to the writings of men who were the descendents of the enthusiasts, Luther's old liturgical antagonists in Wittenberg. One of these was Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) whose Lutheran mysticism eventually came to influence John Wesley. Another was Johann Arndt (1555-1621). His major contribution, *Wahres Christenthum*, would have profound influence on a serious Lutheran pastor by the name of Philip Jacob Spener. Although the theologies of these pre-war enthusiasts came in various flavors, they invariably stressed the Christian life at the expense of Christian teaching, sanctification before justification and experience instead of the Means of Grace. In this they were Calvinistic, and so were their spiritual children. "German Pietism is certainly to be regarded as an overflow of the Calvinistic spirit into the territory of Lutheranism" (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 146).

Orthodox Lutheranism may have won the day had it not been for the Thirty Years War. Between 1618 and 1648 Germany literally was a battleground. For as much as the land and the people suffered, the church suffered even more. Pastors were killed or driven into exile, churches were burned and congregations scattered. In many localities a whole generation of German youth grew up without religious education and the great Lutheran emphasis on doctrinal precision began to seem somewhat superfluous amid the carnage of the battlefield and the sorrow of the cemetery. To their credit pastors tried to restore an orderly church life and practice at war's end, despite unendurably large congregations. To their discredit—and this seems to have been true of too many pastors—they failed to add both life and life applications to their preaching and teaching and too often resorted to legalistic methods to encourage Christian living and attendance at church and communion. (We will have more to say about this problem in another essay.) It was not uncommon in the German churches that church members who lived notably impious lives were seated below the pulpit and kneeling at the communion rail regularly.

It was not at all surprising that there would have been a reaction. In 1675 Philip Spener published his *Pia Desideria* which contained six major proposals for reform. The university at Halle began producing pastors who possessed the pietistic spirit, having been trained by Spener's protegee, August Francke. Moravianism, under Nikolaus Zinzendorf, separated itself from the Lutheran Church after 1727, but most Pietists remained withal the pale of Lutherism. They insisted on the personal integrity and conviction of the clergy, encouraged more practical and effective preaching, promoted Bible reading, personal devotion and prayer. The privilege and responsibility of lay activity were stressed as was a renewed conception of mission work.

Had these emphases been promoted within the parameters of Biblical theology they would have brought great benefit to the Lutheran Church. Tragically, they were not. What had been the strength of orthodoxy, its careful formulations of correct doctrine, was considered by the Pietists to be exactly that which had brought about the need for reform. Soon enough doctrine became synonymous with gospel and no longer the Means of Grace but personal experiences were considered to be productive of life change. It seemed, at least to the Pietists, that proclaiming the objective facts of Scripture had done nothing in Germany but encourage hypocrisy. They were correct in their opinion that there was some blame to be laid for the problems in the church; they were right to suppose that a solution could be found. But they were tragically wrong when they laid the blame on the Word and the sacraments and found the solution in subjectivism.

Since it was in church that Word and sacrament were most notably in use, Pietism's whipping boy became liturgical worship. Beginning with Spener's suggestion that genuine Christians meet apart from the regular service (his "ecclesiolae in ecclesia" or "collegia pietatis") the Pietists continually downplayed the Lutheran worship heritage. As their meetings became more subjective and emotional and as they struggled for a personal consciousness of their conversion and rebirth, they lost all appreciation for the objective facts of the gospel. With that point of view the liturgy and the church year became irrelevant. The doctrine-filled prayers of the church gave way to ex corde meanderings by pastors and laymen. Hymns based on objective facts of redemption were discarded for those expressing immediate personal experience. Highly emotional, even frilly tunes replaced the rugged chorales. Opera-like solos and sentimental songs in the popular, contemporary styles

displaced choral music which had so carefully carried Biblical texts to Lutheran hearts. And it was Pietism, more than any other force, which fostered the devaluing of the Lord's Supper in the regular worship life of the Lutheran Church. Luther Reed comments:

Orthodoxy, though cold and intellectual, had respected objectivity and preserved formal dignity and reverence. Pietism, with its intensely personal limitations, neither understood nor long used what remained of the restrained and polished forms of the church's historic liturgical system (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 146).

In rejecting liturgical worship the Pietists proved how far they were from Luther's thinking. In fact, for precisely the same reasons Luther promoted liturgical worship, the Pietists rejected it. Luther saw the liturgy and the church year promoting the gospel and the sacrament as part of the gospel; so did the Pietists and thus they rejected it. Luther saw the church's way of worship as a confession of the present church's unity with the church of the past. So did the Pietists who also saw in the church of the past papism and dead orthodoxy. Luther saw in the liturgy order and dignity for the sake of the gospel. So did the Pietists; the reason they rejected the liturgy was for the sake of emotional spontaneity. Luther chose to employ the western rites as a testimony that he would not subscribe to the faulty hermeneutic of the enthusiasts. The Pietists sensed that purpose in Luther's choice and rejected the rites because they wanted to break down confessional barriers between like-minded reborn brothers. In short, almost every theological thing Luther stood for was eventually disputed by the Pietists. Should it surprise us that they also disdained that which so ably supported what Luther stood for, namely liturgical worship? In 17th and 18th century Germany, Pietism stabbed the Lutheran Church in its liturgical heart. Without that gospel-pumping organ, the body lay bleeding and dying. Rationalism may have finally killed the German church, but Pietism rendered it defenseless.

Except for the grace of God (and several of God's servants) Pietism might have delivered the same blow to the Lutheran Church in the new world. Although Henry Muehlenberg's 1748 liturgy gave the fledgling Pennsylvania Ministerium a good liturgical beginning (despite Muehlenberg's Halle training), it wasn't long before America's Lutherans began to be affected by Europe's rationalism and unionism. Carl Schalk claims that the worship orders and hymns which appeared in Philadelphia and New York between 1786 and 1860 could have been used with satisfaction by a Unitarian or Arian. (*A Handbook of Church Music*, p. 85) Now there were Pietists in America who were concerned by this absolute lack of a Lutheran confessionalism. Samuel S. Schmucker (1799-1873), driving force behind the formation of the General Synod and founder of the Gettysburg Seminary, was one of them. He was also the leading proponent of what he called "American Lutheranism." Schmucker was no friend of the Rationalists, but he was no friend of Luther's, either. He sent out from Gettysburg a generation and more of pastors whom he taught to see five errors in the Augsburg Confession: an approval of the ceremonies of the Mass, the approval of private confession and absolution, a denial of the divine obligation of the Sabbath, and the affirmation of baptismal regeneration in baptism and of the real presence in the Lord's Supper. With those presuppositions, I need not mention what Schmucker thought of Luther's worship principles! It should be obvious that the Pietists, given their emphasis on emotionalism and mission work, would have been strongly attracted to the reformed revivalism which swept through America during the early years of the 19th century. Revivalism, as we have noted, needs little more in corporate worship than experiential hymns, fiery preaching and altar calls and this became the stuff that Lutheran worship was made of in the 1840s. Liturgical worship was thus rejected by the American Pietists for the same reasons it had been rejected by their German ancestors.

This brings us to a point which is not so far removed from 1989. The story of the confessional revival, the Erweckung, is well-known among us. Lutheran theologians in Germany, finally reacting to the horrors wrought by Pietism and Rationalism, took another look at Luther and the Confessions and began to promote sound Lutheran doctrine and practice. Their influence reached America by means of scholarly writing and immigration. The Saxons established their Zion on the Mississippi in the 1830s; Wilhelm Loehe sent confessional missionaries to the Saginaw Valley in the 1840s; Charles Porterfield Krauth led sound Lutherans

out of Schmucker's General Synod and helped establish first an opposition seminary at Philadelphia and then the General Council in 1867. In all three cases we see orthodox Lutheranism being reestablished—and in all three cases we see orthodox Lutheran leaders rediscovering the value of liturgical worship. Loehe sent his *Agenda for Christian Congregations of the Lutheran Confession* to Frankenmuth in 1844. C.F.W. Walther published the *Church Agenda* in 1856. Krauth was a member of the committee which produced *The Church Book* in 1868. The first and the last of these are the direct ancestors of the 1888 *Common Service* which has been the worship order of most Wisconsin Synod congregations since 1941.

I have tried to show in this admittedly long review of church history that a church's choice of a liturgical form of worship has very little to do with tradition and very much to do with confession. Invariably, those who chose the triple crown of the western rite, the church year and the inclusion of the Lord's Supper were those who came down on the side of SOLA GRATIA, SOLA FIDE and SOLA SCRIPTURA. Invariably those who rejected the importance of the SOLAS rejected liturgical worship. This is not to say that every proponent of liturgical worship has remained confessional or even that he chose to be liturgical for the right reasons. Nor will I contend that everyone who tends toward the non-liturgical side of things is a flaming Pietist. But when we hear of the concerns which led Luther to where he landed, when we listen to the voice of the Confessions and when we examine the evidence of history, it becomes perfectly clear why the WELS Joint Hymnal Committee is squarely committed to fostering a worship in our synod which is liturgical.

Not many months had passed after the various committees began their work when the project's liturgy committee determined that the main service it intended to compose would have three objectives: it would follow the orders of parts which occurs in the western mass; it would include provisions for a full set of the church year-ordered propers; it would include (and not allow to be excluded) the sacrament. Along the way a fourth objective was added: the service would allow for an easy and natural inclusion of a baptism. This new service, together with the revision of the *Common Service* (the Sampler liturgy) would assure that at least the next generation of WELS worshipers would be able to benefit from the liturgical principle. The committee is also offering a revision of the main services of the Office, Matins and Vespers (Morning Worship, Evening Worship), and, because there still is a need for it in our synod, a service without communion entitled *Service of the Word*. In the two main services, however, the committee is convinced that the liturgical principle has been employed. It is perhaps noteworthy that the committee followed no specific order as a pattern for either of its communion services. For instance, the inclusion of an Old Testament lesson has little historic precedent nor does the placement of the offering section after the communion in *Service of Word and Sacrament*. The committee is convinced, however, that there are good reasons for both innovations (and for a few others as well) just like Luther was convinced that a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer was a salutary addition to his German service. He did not feel, nor do we, that such minor variations violate the liturgical principle. As you can see on the appended chart, there is no mistaking either the *Sampler* liturgy or the *Service of Word and Sacrament* for anything but a version of the historic rite.

The committee is also working to provide ways and means for an increased use of the propers in its new services. We are making a real effort to allow sung psalmody to become a natural and easy task for worshipers. We have carefully crafted Proper Prefaces which fit into the communion liturgy in a streamlined way. You will see in the years to come an encouragement to church choirs to become liturgical in their orientation, i.e., to have as their primary objective not simply to "beautify" the service but to sing the propers and to assist with the hymns. New and easy settings of the Gospel Verse (today's version of the gradual) are on the market and can be used not only by choirs but by soloists, children's choruses and sections of choirs. A worship leader's manual is in the planning stages. It may be that as much as a third of its pages will be devoted to helping pastors, choir directors and organists plan for the liturgical worship of our congregations.

The Hymnal Committee is intent on using the new hymnal to encourage a stronger and deeper love for the Lord's Supper. We are not forming services which foster a pre-communion dismissal (a pre-communion dismissal in the SWS is also a pre-offering dismissal!). Both communion services have been streamlined so that even larger congregations can be at the benediction within an hour and ten minutes or so. I am not going to try to champion an increased use of the sacrament on these pages. Let it be said that gathering all the evidence

which supports an every-Sunday communion besides an every-Sunday sermon would fill many volumes; gathering all the evidence which discourages such a practice would hardly fill a page. That the early Christians received the Supper whenever they gathered on the Lord's Day is obvious as one reads in the Acts and 1 Corinthians. The Apology states: "In our churches Mass is celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals, when the Sacrament is offered to those who wish for it" (AP XV:49-51). Wilhelm Loehe, whom I credited earlier as being one of the champions of a liturgical worship in the Franconian colonies, wrote in his agenda:

A morning service on Sundays or festivals without communion is like a broken column...God is rich toward all who seek him, and those who come to his table shall be satisfied with the abundance of his house. Nor ought anyone to say that frequent celebration serves to bring the Sacrament into contempt, for those who are rightly prepared will always hunger for this bread and thirst for this drink; and the more frequent that they commune, the firmer becomes the persuasion that all of the earthly life is only a preparation for the celebration of the great Supper on high...It should not often occur that the Communion is altogether omitted from the morning service.

I conclude my lectures on liturgical worship in the Junior class with this outline statement: The use of a liturgical form of worship demands ongoing education, occasional revitalization and a determined commitment. If you permit us, the Hymnal Committee will take care of the occasional revitalization, and the next essay will take up the ongoing education. That leaves the matter of a determined commitment.

There has not always been nor is there now a strong appreciation in the WELS for liturgical worship. Our roots, those of our pastors and our people, are in Pietism, and while we have come away from Pietism theologically, we have not come away from it liturgically, not completely. We have become used to a liturgical service in the last 45 years and we tend to preach and hear pericoped sermons, but Martin Albrecht recalled in a recent article in *Focus on Worship* the real problems the *Common Service* encountered at the hands of many pastors. He has told me in private conversations that few pastors valued or understood the church year at the beginning of his ministry. In my limited observations there is very little being done with church choirs to move through the church year by means of the propers and there is a great deal of preaching which does not match the focus of the lectionary. There remains in most of us a little uneasiness about things liturgical. Even the term conjures up visions of chancel prancers and beribboned dandies. The association of American liturgical renewal with ecumenism and liberal theology has done nothing but discourage much liturgical interest, as do the invariable excesses which occur whenever someone is trying to make a point. Add to our professional fears the feelings of many of our members who simply do not understand the purpose and function of our worship and you see why the integrity of liturgical worship demands a determined commitment.

It is exactly those concerns which led Luther and then Walther, Loehe and Krauth to choose liturgical worship that ought to stiffen our commitment. Our Lutheran Church of the 20th century is no less a part of the Christian Church than was the church of the 16th century. In a recent essay explaining the contemporary translations of the creeds, Theodore Hartwig eloquently defended this truth:

In matters of outward form, past Lutheran practice...has avoided the sectarianism of going it alone, being different, striving for the unique. Thus Luther kept with the church year and the general structure of the Mass inherited from the medieval church...Though for confessional reasons, we live in a state of outwardly divided communions, the Christian church nevertheless remains a single catholic community of believers confessing one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

In this light would anyone want to gainsay that the sameness of outward form...has been a heartwarming and compelling witness to the true unity of the Church?

The people of 20th century America, no less than the Germans of Luther's day, need order in their worship: one or two services, one church calendar, one set of propers, etc. Hopefully, our new hymnal will speed the day when we can overcome what Luther feared, namely, "everyone parading his talents and confusing the people so that they can neither learn nor retain anything." A worship which is liturgical will help to accomplish this end.

Today's church needs to testify as clearly as did Luther's that it will not bow to the contention that the gospel needs a better package. When John Richards, professor of liturgies at the Gettysburg Seminary, disdained the new *Common Service* in the 1890s, committee member George Wenner made the use of the new rite a matter of confessionalism. Wenner knew that Gettysburg was Schmucker's seminary and that for 40 years the school had been promoting a doctrine which was decidedly unlutheran. For Wenner, the use of the liturgical rite was, in fact, a confession of the gospel and a failure to use it was a denial of the same. (The entire debate, found in issues of *The Lutheran Quarterly*, 1890-91, is in the Seminary library.) We could not go as far as Wenner, but when voices are raised in opposition to the liturgical principle, we are compelled to ask, "Why?" The question is legitimate, I think. Why should we pretend that only our laypeople are impressed by the formless celebrations of the Reformed?

Finally, our Lutheran Church, like Luther's, needs to be forced Sunday by Sunday to proclaim "Christ for us" before "Christ in us," justification before sanctification, objective fact before subjective feeling and Means of Grace before joyful response. The forms of liturgical worship—the historic order, the church year and the sacrament—compel those emphases. Non-liturgical forms can do this; invariably they do not. Especially in these days do such emphases need to be maintained. You surely noticed the similarities between Pietism's objectives and those of our spiritual renewal awareness. It can be said of us as it was said of the Pietists that, if these objectives are sought within the parameters of the Means of Grace, they can be a great blessing to the church. If they are not—well, let's not suppose that scenario. Let's suppose instead that liturgical worship with all its Lutheran benefits will become the heart and soul of our spiritual renewal. May God grant it to be so.

Luther's Latin Service 1523

Introit
 Kyrie
 Gloria in Excelsis
 Salutation
 Collect
 Epistle
 Gradual/Alleluia
 Gospel
 Nicene Creed
 Sermon (or before Introit)
 Preface
 Institution
 Sanctus
 Lord's Prayer
 Pax Domini
 Agnus Dei
 Distribution
 Collect
 Salutation
 Benedicamus
 Benediction

The Common Service 1888

Invocation
 Confession of Sins
 Introit
 Kyrie
 Gloria in Excelsis
 Salutation
 Collect
 Epistle
 Gradual/Hallelujah
 Gospel
 Creed
 Hymn
 Sermon
 Offertory
 General Prayer
 Hymn
 Preface
 Sanctus
 Lord's Prayer
 Institutino
 Pax Domini
 Agnus Dei
 Distribution
 Nunc Dimittis
 Thanksgiving
 Collect
 Salutation
 Benedicamus
 Benediction

The Roman Mass 1970

Introit
 Invocation
 Confession
 Kyrie
 Gloria in Excelsis
 Salutation
 Collect Lesson 1
 Psalm
 Lesson 2
 Alleluia
 Gospel
 Sermon
 Nicene Creed
 Offertory
 Canon of the Mass
 Preface
 Sanctus
 Eucharistic Prayer

Verba
 Agnus Dei
 (many other sections which stress the sacrifice of the Mass)
 Distribution
 Salutation
 Dismissal
 Benediction

The Sampler 1986

Hymn
 Invocation
 Confession
 Kyrie
 Absolution
 Hymn of Praise
 Salutation
 Prayer/Day
 Lesson 1
 Psalm/Day
 Lesson 2
 Gospel Verse
 Gospel
 Nicene Creed
 Hymn/Day
 Sermon
 Offertory
 Offering
 Prayer/Church
 Preface/PP
 Sanctus
 Lord's Prayer
 Verba
 Pax Domini
 Agnus Dei
 Distribution
 Nunc Dimittis
 Thanksgiving
 Prayer
 Benediction

Service of Word & Sacrament, 1990

Apostolic Greeting
 Confession
 Absolution
 Opening Hymn
 Responsive Kyrie
 Hymn of Praise
 Prayer/Day
 Lesson 1

Psalm/Day
 Lesson 2
 Gospel Verse
 Gospel
 Hymn/Day
 Sermon
 Nicene Creed
 Hymn
 Exhortation
 Preface/PP
 Sanctus
 Verba
 Peace of the Lord
 Agnus Dei
 Distribution
 Responsive Offertory
 Offering
 Prayer/Church
 Lord's Prayer
 Exhortation
 Benediction
 Closing Hymn

III. Lutheran Worship Is Congregational

One month before Luther sent *A Treatise on the New Testament* to his publisher, he completed a major work entitled *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. In the former he set forth the scriptural doctrine that the Lord's Supper was not a sacrifice from man to God but a gift from God to man. In the latter he reviewed the Bible's teaching that each Christian is a king and priest, and, through Christ, the true mediator, has a direct access to God in his prayers and praise. Thus, within the space of a month, from June to July of 1520, Luther established the two principles which are the cornerstones of Lutheran worship, namely, that it is evangelical and that it is congregational.

Already in 1517, as he defended his "95 Theses," Luther was coming to the conclusion that neither the papacy nor its priestly system were at all what they claimed to be. In the prelude days of the Leipzig debate he challenged John Eck's claims for the papacy by insisting

The claims that the Roman church stands above all others rests merely on weak papal decretals of the last 400 years; while over against the claim there are 1100 years of church history, the texts from the Holy Scriptures, and the decrees of the Second Council of Nicaea. (quoted in E. Schwiebert's *Luther and His Times*, p. 387)

The sharpest debating at Leipzig was reserved for this point and Eck was quick to condemn Luther's opinion. As his views were attacked by one Romanist after another in the aftermath of Leipzig, Luther's position became bolder. In the address to the German nobility he attacked not only the priesthood but the entire concept that there was a social and religious difference between clergy and laypeople. He considered this concept, as well as Roman's contention that the pope stood above Scripture and church councils, to be walls which the church had built around itself for its protection "in such a way that no one has been able to reform them. As the result, the whole of Christendom has fallen abominably." (*Selected Writings of Martin Luther*, Vol. I, p. 262) This is how he attacked the first of those walls:

It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the temporal estate. This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet no one need be intimidated by it, and for this reason: all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office. Paul says that in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all one body, yet every member has its own work by which it serves the others. This is because we all have one baptism, one gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism, gospel, and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people. (ibid., p. 263)

There is no true basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. (ibid., p. 265)

In both instances Luther clearly indicates that his position in no way undervalued the public ministry. But rather than seeing the clergy as a distinct spiritual class, impressed at ordination with an indelible character and allowed only by right of apostolic succession, he viewed the ministry as the orderly outgrowth of the church's desire to feed and to be fed. He understood that the impetus for the public ministry came from the church, that is, the believers, the body of Christ. According to Luther, the public priest gained his priestly responsibilities and functions by the faith-wrought determination of the priesthood of all believers.

Luther knew (although he did not treat this issue in the address) that this concept grew out of the doctrine of justification. Just as he understood that the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross disallowed the need for the sacrifice of the Mass, so he realized that those who held to Christ's sacrifice by faith needed no priestly intermediary. He wrote: "The Christian Church knows of, and believes in, only one sacrifice whereby the sin of the world was put away and paid for. Just so it also knows and believes that there is only one priest, the Son of the eternal God, born of Mary, Christ Jesus" (*What Luther Says*, p. 1142). Because Christ died for all and confers the full benefit of his saviorship on all who believe "...every baptized Christian is a priest already, not by appointment or ordination from the pope or any other man, but because Christ himself has begotten him as a priest and has given birth to him in baptism" (ibid., p. 1139).

If it is true that Christ "came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near," and if it follows that "through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit," (Eph 2:18-19) if it is part of God's promise that we can "enter the Most Holy Place" because of Christ's sacrifice and "draw near to God...in full assurance of faith," (Heb 10:19,22) then it follows that our way of corporate worship will be ordered in such a way that each believer may bring directly to God his offering of prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

In the first of these essays we reviewed the principle that corporate worship has as its primary function the service of God to his people. However, that principle does not disallow or devalue the fact the corporate worship is also a service of the congregation to God. That God looks for a sacrificium from his children does not compromise the primacy of his beneficium. Jesus told his followers, "You did not choose me, but I chose you"—that's the gift. But Jesus continued: "I chose you and appointed you to bear fruit—fruit that will last."—that's the sacrifice. (John 15:16) This, of course, is not a sacrifice which merits the gift but which results from an appreciation for the gift. Melancthon wrote in the Apology: "When we have been justified by faith and regenerated, we begin to fear and love God, to pray to him, to expect from him aid, to give thanks and praise him, and to obey him in afflictions. We begin also to love our neighbors, because our hearts move in a spiritual and holy way" (*AP III:4*)

Because this is true, St. Paul could write to the Roman Christians: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Rom 12:1-2). A believer's worship, his liturgy (LATREION in Rom 1), his public statement as to what he considers the gift to be worth in his life, is the giving of himself to God. In all he does he puts himself last and God first. He bows down and kneels before the will of his God (Ps 95:6). Like the women on

Easter morning, he clasps the feet of his Savior (Matt 28:9) in recognition of the debt he owes his risen Lord. In both Old and New Testaments the usual words for "worship" (SHACHAH and PROSKUNEW) imply complete obeisance to the King and a denial of self-will for the sake of the will of the Master. Worship, then, is nothing more and nothing less than obedience and faith. In the Large Catechism Luther wrote: "Here you have the meaning of the true worship of God, which pleases God and which he commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart know no other comfort and confidence than in him, and do not suffer itself to be torn from him, but for him risk and disregard everything upon earth" (*LC*, p. 565).

This is worship in the wide sense of the word. The worship which the believer offers to God in the narrow sense of the word is also commanded by God, who calls on his people to pray, praise and give thanks, to confess, adore and acclaim, to sing, rejoice and make music. The passages from Scripture in which God encourages, yes, commands, this sort of worship are too numerous and too obvious to even begin to recount. But this thread runs through them all: where there is failure to offer this specific worship, we find condemnation; where this is remembrance to offer it, we find commendation.

It must be mentioned, of course, that no prayer, confession or acclamation nor any other worship activity is true worship unless it flows from faith. When the psalm writer encouraged Israel to "sing to the Lord a new song" he was urging them to sing the song that came from the new heart of faith. (I am tiring of the use of these "new song" passages to justify contemporary music!) Worship which does not come from such a heart is nothing more than civic righteousness. The Jews of Jesus' day worshiped without that heart. Jesus said of them: "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he said about you: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain'" (Matt 15:7-8). It is not the sound of the worship that counts, but the source. Jesus told the Samaritan woman: "God is a spirit, and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

Faith, the source of that spiritual worship, is itself a gift of God. St. Paul was writing in the sphere of worship when he wrote to the Corinthians, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor 12:3) In his *book Worship In the Name of Jesus*, Peter Brunner treats this issue thoroughly.

The congregation's service before God becomes real by reason of the fact that God Himself presents the congregation with the act of service as His gift. If God does not arouse us to His service through the Holy Spirit, all that we do in worship remains dead. (p.197)

It is true that nothing in our worship activity serves God unless it has first been given us by God. All that we do in worship is God-pleasing service only insofar as it issues from the Spirit poured out over us. (p. 199)

God commands our worship, both the worship which occurs in the wider context of the Christian life and that which is offered specifically in prayer, praise and thanksgiving. This worship can occur only through faith. Faith is a gift of God and belongs only to those who are part of his family. For this reason it is natural that believers should value and God should commend the corporate worship of his family and the joint articulation of the body of believers. There are divine commands to this end; there are many more examples of it on the pages of Scripture. The worship life which God ordered for Old Testament Israel presumed an assembly. Jesus spoke of the benefits of the gathering of believers when he said, "Where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them" (Matt 18:20). The only prayer he ever suggested obviously had the church in mind: "Our Father in heaven..." Just as the individual's private worship is a confession of his unity with God, so the church's worship expresses its confidence that all its members share one Lord, one faith and one baptism. In his private worship the Christian knows by faith that he is united with all other Christians; in corporate worship he confesses that unity and he and his fellow believers, with a single heart and mind, praise Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In his *Sermon on the Sacrament* (1519) Luther wrote:

Christ and all his saints are one spiritual body, just as the inhabitants of a city are one community and body, each citizen being a member of the other and of the entire city. All the saints, therefore, are members of Christ and of the church, which is a spiritual and eternal city of

God...To receive this Sacrament in bread and wine, then, is nothing else than to receive a sure sign of this fellowship and incorporation with Christ and all saints. (*LW*, 35: p. 51)

But the function of the congregation at worship is not only to offer a united, faith-empowered song of praise to God, nor is corporate worship simply a confession of faith in the fellowship of all believers. The fellowship we share has the practical value that it ministers to one another. This purpose of corporate worship is alluded to in several of the most commonly-adduced "worship" passages in the New Testament. The writer to the Hebrews had this purpose in mind when he wrote: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" (Heb 10:25). Paul wrote to the Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16). In his letter to the Ephesians Paul summarized perfectly the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the church's prayer and praise: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God our Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 5:19-20).

Finally, as the arrows of corporate worship point up to God and aside to our neighbor, they also point back to each individual. We are very clear and correct to teach that prayer is not a Means of Grace, but as we speak our prayers we recall the message of the Means. This is certainly true, for instance, of the Lord's Prayer. Some pastors have taught their confirmation classes to speak the prayer slowly so that, as each petition is prayed, the believer can remember the grace of God on which the prayer is based. David praised the Lord and in so doing he did not forget all the Lord's benefits—his healing, his forgiveness and his redemption (Ps 103). It is certainly true that the Christian prays what he believes. It is just as true that the Christian believes what he prays. The old saying summarizes that fact like this: *lex orandi, lex credendi*—the form of prayer is the form of faith.

Up to this point the essay has addressed a fairly narrow subject, i.e., the Christian's sacrifice of prayer, praise and thanksgiving. This is only one part of the corporate worship experience—the other being the beneficium—and, in fact, it is the less important part. We have spoken only of the function of that sacrifice, and yet we have exhausted five pages of text. However, this study of the congregation's purpose in worship was a necessary prelude to the subject which follows: the form of the congregation's prayer, praise and thanksgiving. If worship is to function properly, the form of the congregation's worship must be pure.

We have carefully developed the point in previous essays that the forms of our worship are within the church's freedom. It think it is not saying too much, however, to state that the choice of a form is not free. As we have observed, Luther had a desire for a formless worship of sorts but discovered that he didn't have the people for it in Wittenberg. It is likely he wouldn't have found the people for it anywhere else, either. Finally, even Luther had this to say about form: "We cannot live without them."

The reason this is true is that believers have a sinful flesh which clings to them until they die. Peter Brunner wrote:

All participants in worship are constrained to concede that their worship is constantly endangered by their old carnal essence. The struggle between flesh and spirit, which pervades the entire obedience of the Christian, is perhaps nowhere so brisk, so incisive, so inexorable as it is here where we are gathered as members of a congregation in service to God and before God. (*Worship In the Name of Jesus*, p. 197)

As long as believers retain in their flesh a stubborn independence from God and a distinct selfishness over against their neighbor, there remains the danger that their worship will be impure.

A classic example of this can be observed in Corinth. The congregation there had received a wonderful foundation and had grown in faith and love. Paul commended the members for their wisdom and abilities. Little by little, however, the sinful flesh of many of the members began to lead them away from what they had learned and soon their corporate worship was affected, too. They allowed the influence of Corinthian society to

compromise their praise of God; some members actually became drunk at their assemblies. Their actions toward their fellow believers as they celebrated the Supper did not edify but offended. And their activities at worship did nothing for themselves. In fact, some of their weaknesses and sicknesses could be attributed to God's chastening judgment on their practices. To solve these problems Paul preached the law, he proclaimed the gospel—and he instituted forms.

In a sense, forms in worship have a law function; they serve as a curb to control the flesh. With a form the worshiper loses his options. He cannot pray or praise this way or that. His words and songs cannot be compromised by his flesh. As long as the form is pure, the believer is obligated, despite the meanderings to which his flesh tempts him, to worship with words that are pure. Faith moves him to worship in spirit; the form helps him to worship in truth.

Some contend that the church is too careful about the forms of worship, perhaps even legalistic. These voices offer the opinion that forms stifle spontaneity in worship and inevitably turn worship into formalism. They cite Jesus' warnings against imitating the babbling of the pagans. Their concerns are well-taken. We submit, however, that they are also somewhat naive. It is not the nature of Satan to leave the church at worship alone. Why should he be less interested in the worship assembly than in any other part of the church's activity? Nor does it follow that a little impurity now and then hurts no one. Impurity never edifies, even if it is unintentional. A prayer for the death of all pro-choice advocates may be suggested by a pro-life interest which springs from faith, but such a prayer is not God-pleasing worship. Impurities in praise never edify fellow believers, though the impurities are presented with enthusiasm and devotion, nor do those forms benefit the believer who uses them. Contemporary song lyrics which contain an Armenian call for a decision for Christ are never spiritually edifying, no matter how relevant or well-loved their musical accompaniment may be. As long as it desires to preserve the Biblical function of corporate praise and prayer and as long as believers retain a sinful flesh, the church will need to face the reality that form is necessary and that pure form is vital.

There are other reasons, of course, why form is important when the congregation is at worship. We will develop the point in the next essay that human beings are not only intellectual but also emotional creatures. Form helps us to achieve a balance between what is cognitive in worship and what is affective. Returning vicars often mention that they learned the hard way that they served the people little spiritual value from a hymn with an unknown melody despite the hymn's very orthodox text. The best of texts can get lost when they are overwhelmed by music, setting and arrangement. On the other hand, the deadening foreign language refrains of popular religious songs like "Kum Ba Ya" and "El Shaddai" have negligible spiritual value despite their emotional tunes. More on this when we speak of music and the arts in the next essay.

Of course, it is not easy to discover forms which can have spiritual value for the wide variety of human beings who are part of the body of Christ assembled for worship. How can one form reach the intellectual or emotional levels of both the college professor and the confirmand, the strong Christian and the weak, and the North German and the Italian? Yet our task is to find exactly such forms. There are no special interest groups in corporate worship. Paul makes this clear: "Everything is permissible—but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others" (1 Cor 10:23). Form in worship is valuable because it seeks to strike a balance on behalf of those who come to pray, praise and give thanks.

We have alluded already to a last value of form in worship. As the believer's formed sacrifice of prayer and praise become a sacrament for him and his neighbor, that is, when in speaking and singing he recalls and recounts the blessings of God, the repetition of the form has great value. It is true enough that reiterative forms carry the risk of becoming vain babbling; it is just as true that forms which are forever new bear the risk of allowing nothing to sink its teeth into the fiber of the believer's heart and soul. If the dictum *LEX ORANDI, LEX CREDENDI* is true, then this dictum is also true: *REPETITIO MATER STUDIORUM*. It is self-evident that Christians will not recall on their deathbeds all the beautiful forms of our "special services" with anything approaching the thoroughness with which they recall well-worn hymns, prayers and liturgies.

As clearly as Luther understood that the redeemed congregation had the right to bring its prayer and praise God without the intercession of a human mediator, so he grasped that the sinful congregation needed

forms in worship so that its prayer and praise could be truly God-pleasing. He did not favor a variety of rites because they "confuse the people so they can neither learn nor retain anything" (*LW* 53, p. 80). He suggested a common order "because you see that the people want it and need it and you wish to edify rather than confuse them" (*LW* 53, p. 48). He was all for freedom, but he urged "by love be bound to serve your neighbor's edification" (*LW* 53, p. 48). He was concerned about orderly worship "lest the common people get confused and discouraged" (*LW*, p. 47). The Confessions speak in a similar way: "For ceremonies are needed to this end alone that the unlearned be taught what they need to know of Christ" (*AC* XXIV:3). The Apology says:

They [the fathers] observed human rites for the sake of bodily advantage, that the people might know at what time they should assemble; that, for the sake of example, all things in the church might be done in order and becomingly; lastly that the common people might receive a sort of training. For the distinction of times and the variety of rites are of service in admonishing the common people. (*AP* XV:20)

Both Luther and the authors of the Confessions were determined to reestablish and then to retain the integrity of the worship of the congregation. The church had a right and a responsibility to present directly to God its sacrifice of praise. Believers at worship had an obligation to edify their neighbor and to build up their own faith. To accomplish these objectives, forms were necessary in worship. As they surveyed the scene, they concluded that the forms which could serve these ends in the best way were the ancient rite, the church year and the regular inclusion of the sacrament, that is, liturgical worship. It is interesting to note that our Lutheran forefathers determined to uphold both the congregational principle and the evangelical principle by the use of the liturgical principle!

Your essayist agrees heartily with their decision (no risk-taking here!). Just as liturgical worship allows for a thorough proclamation of the beneficium, so it includes many opportunities for the sacrificium of praise. I am not going to review the entire service here on these pages, but think how well the liturgy balances sacramental and sacrificial elements. It encourages the pastor to announce "the peace of the Lord" and it gives the congregation a chance to "lift up its heart to the Lord." And the forms we use for our sacrifice are pure. They are able to edify self and neighbor because they recall the mercies and the will of God as both are revealed in the Scriptures. The ordinary of the service repeats Sunday after Sunday the great truths that need to stick tight to Christian hearts and the proper adds the element of variety, thus avoiding too much repetition. Liturgical worship recognizes that believers need to be nourished and to nourish each other not just with spiritual milk but also with meat. The simple truths of the gospel are repeated each week, but they are reviewed with beauty and nobility, and every year the congregation recalls the most important events in the Savior's ministry and the principle themes of the Christian life. Because of these emphases liturgical worship serves the requirements of all the members of the congregation, for all believers, despite social, economic or intellectual differences, share a common need of law and gospel.

"Liturgy" is a word which comes from two Greek words, LAOS and ERGON. The liturgy is the work of the people. In my opinion—and this is an opinion I share with the rest of the framers of our new hymnal—liturgical worship more than any other form of worship is best able to meet the needs of the congregation at the work of worship. For the sake of the congregational principle as much as for any other, the committee has chosen this form of worship for our new hymnal.

From time to time voices are raised also in our circles which question that decision. Especially when hymnal committees or committee members present a strong defense for liturgical worship, pleas are raised for congregational sovereignty in the choice of worship forms. These voices invariably cite the Lutheran Confessions with accuracy:

We believe, teach and confess that the congregation of God of every place and every time has the power, according to its circumstances, to change such ceremonies in such a manner as may be the most useful and edifying to the congregation of God. (*FC* Epitome X:2)

But another side of that coin is also found in the Confessions:

It is lawful for Bishops and pastors to make ordinances that things be done orderly in the church. It is proper that the church should keep such ordinances for the sake of love and tranquility, so far that one does not offend another, that all things be done in the churches in order, and without confusion. (AC XXVIII:53, 55)

The point I want to make here is not that the Hymnal Committee desires to lord it over the synod's congregations, but rather that our pastors and congregations take pause before they determine to go it alone. It is indeed proper to insist that the believers themselves have the right to decide the form of corporate worship they want to employ. Is it equally proper, however, for the congregation always to employ that right? In other words, does the congregation itself always have the ability to determine the forms of public worship which best suit its needs? In dozens of ways a body of believers calls upon certain individuals to make decisions on its behalf. Our church body, for instance, did not put into the hands of each congregation the task of writing its own *This We Believe*. Christians throughout our synod gave their tacit approval to the decision to designate qualified men to carry out this writing of that confessional statement. In the same way believers properly call upon others to assist them in forming a set of rites for public worship. Writing in his book *Luther On Worship*, Vilmos Vajta suggests this was Luther's point of view:

The believer indeed is free in stated forms of worship. He worships in spirit and truth. Yet he submits to them, first, because he himself is not a perfect Christian and needs to be trained in the faith, and second, in order to help his neighbor grow in faith. (pp. 174-75)

While there is surely valuable service which can be rendered by a congregation's worship committee, we do not seem to be defending the congregational principle when these committees pass judgment on rites and services, decide which, if any, will be used or what will be accepted and rejected and then compose individualistic rites for their own purposes. An LCMS pastor, Roger Pitelko, commented in a recent essay entitled "Worship":

Pastors and congregations seem to feel that they can go it alone and that knowledge, or even skill and ability, are really not needed. All that is needed is desire and good spirit for good worship, and that all are equally competent to construct a form that will be superior and will suit their needs. In almost no other area of activity would such an idea be held—from building a house to repairing electronic equipment or setting broken bones—skill and knowledge would be expected and required. But it appears that all consider themselves to be experts in the field of worship and liturgy....

The second question which is raised about the liturgical/congregational principle comes from those who have a sincere desire to use corporate worship as a tool for evangelism. The Hymnal Committee has been besieged by requests from mission executives, pastors and laypeople to produce orders of service and to include hymns with the unchurched and the new convert in mind. The usual contention is that liturgical worship is not conducive to evangelism and outreach. Perhaps that contention is correct. On the other hand, I am ready to contend that the purpose of corporate worship, whether its form is liturgical or not, is not evangelism and outreach.

There are several questions which need to be asked. Here is the first: Is an invitation to an unchurched person to worship a contradiction in terms? If only a believer can worship God aright, how can we invite an unbeliever to worship? Even if we simplify our services so that they contain only a prayer or two, a well-known hymn or two and a confession of faith, the service still has elements of sacrifice. How can an unchurched

individual who may have had an incorrect concept of prayer all his life, bow his head to pray? How can a visitor who thinks of Jesus only as a great teacher, sing "Beautiful Savior"? How can a newcomer confess a faith he does not hold? I fear that an across-the-neighborhood invitation to worship runs the risk of fostering a "form is worship" concept, an idea which encourages hypocrisy. Someone may ask, "How do you know such a person has no faith?" I ask, "Where is their confession that they do?" We have no right to assume that interest to attend our service equals faith or to expect that the Holy Spirit will use the gospel proclaimed in a specific service to effect an immediate conversion or that in one short hour the visitor will be rid of pre-conceived notions of religion. If an unchurched person came to my service, would I send him away? Of course not. I would welcome him with open arms—and then I would skip the Packer game to be able to meet with him that afternoon (unless he were a Packer fan. I also believe in friendship evangelism!) Seriously, I need to be convinced that it is wise procedure to invite a person to worship who has not confessed Christ. I might add here that I consider it equally unwise to invite most delinquents to church.

Suppose an individual has confessed Christ during an evangelism visit. May he be invited to worship? This leads to a second question: If corporate worship is going to give the new Christian what he truly needs and requires, can it also serve the maturing believer? We have reviewed already the value liturgical worship has for the believer (cf. p. 9 [bottom of p. 25ff of this on-line essay]). Almost all of these would be lost if we were to structure the service for the needs of the new Christian. The new believer needs milk, not meat. He needs to be able to ask questions, to focus in on difficult doctrines and to see how these fit into the plan of salvation. The changing emphases of the church year and the sacramental/sacrificial dialog in the liturgy will be unintelligible to him. He is not ready to examine himself for the Lord's Table. Can the believers, even for the sake of love for the lost, afford to give up all these things? Some churches have attempted to solve this problem by scheduling their outreach services on Sunday and their nourishing services on a weeknight. This may be a good plan for some of our newer missions, but there is little chance it will succeed in an established congregation. The strong and the unchurched will be served, but that large group in the middle will go lacking. Some have suggested "event" Sundays or "Friendship" Sundays. One wonders what happens when the visitors return to that church a week later only to sing the "Gloria in Excelsis" instead of "Amazing Grace," to hear a stewardship sermon instead of a sermon on the friendly love of Jesus, and to read in the bulletin about close communion?

There are no easy solutions for the problems which arise when we try to make corporate worship serve both the uninitiated and the initiated. As long as we try to accommodate both, we will have to contend with the temptation to turn worship into entertainment.

This is what the Evangelicals are so good at. They combine an excellent communicator with an outstanding musical ensemble in a breathtaking architectural setting. They offer just what many Americans—and many Lutherans—are looking for these days: religion without commitment, worship without participation, growth without strain or, as David Lueke calls it, "believing before belonging." (*Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*, p. 57). The high emotion of the entertainment-oriented worship allows that sort of religion. Our fellowship principles as well as our limited budgets likely will discourage us from doing entertainment very well, but even if we could accomplish it, we would not be doing the unchurched or the churched any favors. The congregation does not gather for worship to sit back and be religiously titillated. Harold Senkbeil draws this quotation from F. H. Brabant:

All this demand for a worship which shall be the "natural" expression of what we feel, just like the demand for a devotional life always in the sunshine, without method or effort, is at bottom a confusion between the natural and the easy. We do not go to church to say and do "just as we like." ... We come, stained and weary from a life that is largely unnatural, longing for something to lift us up into an atmosphere of spiritual peace. We ought, indeed, to "feel at home" in church, but we come to it as wanderers returned, not like tired city men calling for our slippers and our comfortable chairs. This is why we need all the help we can get from without, the steadiness of discipline, the beauty of holiness, the unswerving faith of the church, upon which to lean our

poor half-heartedness. This is why the liturgy not only expresses what we feel; it also teaches us what we ought to feel. (*Sanctification*, p. 180)

We are wisest to remember that Christian worship is for Christians and that Christians are for worship!

This is the last question: Does the church have other ways to do evangelism besides corporate worship? The answer, of course, is: Of course! Luther did not hesitate to offer a simplified form of worship for the less mature or knowledgeable congregations; his German service attests to that. But in his preface to that simple service he wrote:

The German service needs a plain and simple, fair and square catechism. Catechism means the instruction in which the heathen who want to be Christians are taught and guided in what they should believe, know, do and leave undone. (*LW*, 53, p. 64)

Luther understood, as we do, that pre-worship instruction was also the custom of the ancient church. Exactly this sort of policy seems to be the emphasis of our outreach/exploratory missionaries; the neighborhood invitation is to study, not to worship. There are some souls, especially those who are intrigued by the Evangelical emphasis, who will not be attracted by this outreach. However, this evangelism methodology copies the example of history, gives the new prospect what he needs, offers an opportunity to explain the concepts and forms of worship and retains the congregational principle.

This strong defense of a liturgical form of worship as that which is best suited for the congregation ought not be perceived as an unqualified defense of all our present practices. I must admit that I am saddened as I observe how little our members seem to know about what happens as they worship. I mentioned in the last essay that liturgical worship demands ongoing education. Are we teaching Bible class courses on worship, do we include a section on worship in our adult and child instruction classes, have we used a narrative service from time to time to explain our liturgy? The people we serve deserve to know at least as much about the church's worship as they do about the church's budget!

We pastors need to give our people opportunities to worship. In the Prayer of the Church (General Prayer) do we really pray for things which are on their minds or do we repeat the thoughts of the sermon in lofty language? Can we work with our organists so that service playing does not stifle praise? Not so long ago I had to endure a musical rendering of the "Gloria in Excelsis" which would have been more fitting for a text entitled "Ingloria in Profundis." Does our preaching touch the happenings of peoples' lives so that they can see a reason for their prayers, praise and thanksgiving? I mentioned previously that we can avoid the excesses of Pietism if we hold to the liturgical principle. We can also avoid the excesses of Orthodoxy if we hold to the congregational principle.

By its commitment to the liturgical principle the Joint Hymnal Committee is also committed to the congregational principle. Liturgical worship includes the congregation. But there is much more that needs to be done besides the production of a hymnal. Committees, pastors and worship assistants need to work together to allow and encourage the people of God to worship. Our service is evangelical for them; our service is congregational for them. We need to remember this in our planning and our leading. Then they will derive the best benefits from the beneficium and offer the best in their sacrificium of praise.

IV. Lutheran Worship is Appreciative of the Arts

Although there are some Reformation scholars who feel sure that Luther began his hymn writing efforts as early as 1511, we have no actual evidence that anything preceded his 1523 poem, "A New Song Here Shall Now Begin." Less than a year after that hymn appeared, Johann Walther's *Gesangbuechlein* was published and included 24 hymns ascribed to the pen of Martin Luther. Whether authored over ten months or thirteen years, this was a prodigious output!

No one can be sure why Luther produced such a large volume of hymns. The one group points to the combination of his excellent musical training and his deeply emotional faith and insists that he had been putting his thoughts into poetry throughout the stormy days of the Reformation's infancy. The other contends that he discovered his gift quite by accident in 1523 and that, once he observed how quickly the people took to his theological songs, he simply kept writing. There was also a practical use for this new hymnody. When his Latin service appeared in mid-year 1523 he expressed the desire for some good hymns in the vernacular which the people could sing after the gradual and during the distribution. When not many were forthcoming, Luther sat down and, like any good leader, supplied a few himself.

It cannot be doubted, however, that there was another reason for Luther's being taken up with the congregational hymn during 1523 and 1524. You will recall from an earlier essay that it was in the spring of 1522 that Luther squared off with Carlstadt and Zwillig over the use of liturgical ceremonies and religious art. Carlstadt, Wittenberg's theologian-in-residence during Luther's absence at the Wartburg, had begun to tell the people things like "Organs belong only to theatrical exhibitions and princes' palaces"; "Images in churches are wrong"; "Painted idols standing on altars are even more harmful and devilish." He and Zwillig led mobs into several of the town's churches and destroyed altars, statues and other artifacts. (Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*, p. 536-538) About a year later Ulrich Zwingli was up to the same tricks in Zurich. He and a band of cohorts and craftsmen marched into the churches, raised their ladders against the walls and whitewashed the paintings and decorations, carted away the statues and ornaments, the gold and silver equipment, the costly vestments and splendidly bound service books. They closed the organs so that no music of any kind could resound in the churches again. (Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church*, p. 142)

We have reviewed how Luther responded to Carlstadt. From that episode, as well as from our observation of Luther's attitudes toward the culture of western antiquity, we can imagine how he must have bristled when the news from Zurich hit the streets of Wittenberg. There can be no doubt that these events added steely determination to the hymn writing efforts of a man who was already fostering artistic endeavors in the service of God. That the Carlstadt-Zwillig-Zwingli events were still on his mind as his first large group of hymns was published is obvious from the Preface he wrote for Walther's *Gesangbuechlein*:

Nor am I of the opinion that the gospel should destroy and blight all the arts, as some of the super-religious claim. But I would like to see all the arts, especially music, used in the service of him who gave and made them. I therefore pray that every pious Christian would be pleased with this and lend his help if God has given him like or greater gifts. (*LW*: 53, p. 316)

Martin Luther was a man who loved the arts and, of all these, he loved the art of music most. He wrote by far more about music than any of the other arts and deserves the credit, more than anyone else, for the moniker which has been attached to the Lutheran church, "the singing church." However, Luther himself lumped many of the arts together—"preaching, singing, speaking, writing and painting" (*LW*: 13, p. 168)—and so what he wrote about music often can be applied to art in general. By means of his words and the attitudes which lay behind them, Luther established a worship principle which we are still striving to achieve to this day: Lutheran worship is appreciative of the arts. Robert M. Stevenson wrote:

We may say of Luther's musical achievement that he lifted the art to a loftier level than it has attained anywhere else in evangelical thinking. Both theoretically and practically he placed it on a pedestal. No advance we may make in church music will exceed his ideal of what it should be. A practical implementation of his ideals would be today "a consummation devoutly to be wished." (*Patterns In Protestant Church Music*, p. 12)

Before we study in greater detail Luther's attitudes toward the arts and especially his use of the arts, it is wise for us to define the nature and purpose of art in general and then religious art in particular.

Art is something human beings create in a physical, intellectual and emotional way. Someone may say that a new baby or a pristine forest is a work of art, but such statements are metaphorical. The birth of a baby may involve physical activity as well as intellect and emotion, but a child is basically a biological creation. A forest is not a human creation at all, but divine. This is not to say that the Creator plays no part in artistic creation. He, after all, supplies each artist with physical ability, intellectual gifts, and an emotional makeup, as well as the impetus to create art. Because this is true it may be said that, while art is not technically God's creation, it is actually God's gift.

Art is a representation of reality. Religious art is a representation of the reality of God's Word. Robert Wunderlich (*Worship and the Arts*, p. 39ff) envisions two varieties of artistic representation: the sign represents the reality (e.g., the triangle as a representation for the Trinity) and the symbol resembles the reality (e.g., a painting of the empty tomb as a representation of the resurrection). Art may also represent an abstraction like truth, beauty, goodness, or even faith. The well-loved painting of the guardian angel watching over two children crossing a rickety bridge is a classic example of a symbolic representation of divine protection. Bach's captivating pedal motive in "In Thee Is Gladness" is a symbol which represents joy. As art represents reality, art communicates.

It may also be said that art is the representation of the Christian's reality, the symbol of his response to God and his word. By means of his art the believer represents what he thinks or feels about God's reality. When God's word leads him to be content he writes, "Why should cross or trial grieve me?" When God's word makes him joyful he composes the "Hallelujah Chorus." When God's word moves him to solemn grief he sculpts the "Pieta." As he responds to God with his art, he provides other believers with a vehicle that stimulates (communicates) or guides their response to God.

This leads us to the weakness of art, both as a mode of communication and of response. Since art is only a representation of reality, it is never precise communication. Its message depends on the attitude or understanding of the artist. In a church I've visited there hangs a surrealist drawing of the head of Christ. From a distance it conjures up the reality of sad contemplation; it seems to represent the Jesus of early Good Friday morning. On closer inspection one finds superimposed on the head of the Savior dozens of smaller heads: those of Gandhi, King, Kennedy (John and Robert), Mother Theresa, etc. The communication of this work of art is imprecise because the author's concept of Christ is faulty; his Jesus is the Savior of society, the grief he represents is that felt over oppression. The communication of art depends not only on the doer of the art, however; it also depends on the receiver. I had a couple in my Saginaw parish whose son and daughter were swept off a wooden bridge to their death. The communication they perceive in that well-loved painting we mentioned before will not be the same as it is for most of us. The reality which stands behind the symbol of the cross was decidedly different for a 1st century Roman than it is for a 20th century Christian. Wunderlich sees a third weakness in artistic expression. He writes of the symbol which becomes "opaque":

The physical basis for the symbol may be so active a part of our daily lives that there is a danger that we do not see beyond the symbol to the spiritual reality toward which it points. In this case, instead of allowing the symbol to focus our attention on the "beyond," we allow our attention to be focused on the symbol itself. (op, cit. p. 37)

The author frets that the cross may have become one of those opaque symbols. Christian rock music may easily become opaque for teenagers, as can the involved music of Johann Sebastian Bach for classical music lovers. All this leads us to understand why art cannot become a form of communication which stands in place of or even in front of reality, not in our secular lives and certainly not in our spiritual lives.

Nor is art a precise response. John Bowring's poem, "In the Cross of Christ I Glory," is a work of art which represents accurate Biblical theology, and it serves as a fine vehicle for you and me to express our inner emotions about Jesus' work. But it is very likely not a precise representation of Bowring's attitudes; to his dying day he remained a Unitarian. Art is not a universal representation of attitude, either. The tunes that flowed from Luther's and Walther's minds came from the deepest spiritual convictions, but they will never carry my religious

emotions the way a tune from Victorian England does. My six year olds Crayola representation of Calvary does not move me nearly as much as does Salvador Dali's "The Christ of St. John." If you (perhaps because you know Dali!) feel exactly the opposite, you substantiate the contention. All this proves that it is difficult to be objective about art. "Non disputando de gustibus est."

Despite its communicative imprecision and responsive subjectivity, art is vitally a part of human necessity and endeavor. It is so because of what human beings are and because of how they think, feel and believe.

Faith is the saving link between God's universal forgiveness and each individual human being. But faith is not a self-chosen or self-determined link. It is created and sustained by God the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace. There is no simple way to define faith or to explain how the Spirit's Means effect and affect it. We know much more about the human mind. For decades Christian psychologists have observed intellect, emotion and will and have made accurate appraisals of what they have seen. Only God can see faith. Yet faith does not exist apart from psychological realities. Faith "knows" the Holy Scriptures, for instance; in fact, it "grows in...knowledge." Faith feels joy and love. Faith wills to struggle and follow after. Therefore, when we observe how human communication comes to bear on the intellect and how it affects emotion and will, we are also observing how divine communication affects faith. The outline which our senior students follow in the seminary's dogmatics course states: "The operation of the Word is both psychological and supernatural" (Part 2, p. 32). Obviously, we cannot understand all of the mysteries which attend the Spirit's Means and our faith. It is just as obvious that we dare not ignore observations of how communication works on human beings. We ought not assume that the divinely-created mind reacts to human communication in a completely different way than divinely-created faith reacts to divine communication, i.e., the Means of Grace. That there are differences is obvious. So is the observation that there are similarities.

The reality of God's love affects faith-controlled intellect, emotion and will. A symbolic representation of God's love, i.e., art, intends to vividly etch the meaning of that love on the intellect, deeply impress its beauty on the emotions and, thereby, to strengthen the resolve of the will. Without art the reality is present, active, powerful and sufficient. With art the reality is undergirded and solidified.

This contention would be just so much speculation were it not for the fact that God himself has used symbolic representation for exactly the above-mentioned purposes, to etch, deepen and strengthen. God simply might have told Adam and Eve of the reality of his goodness and love. He chose to make the concepts of goodness and love vividly clear by placing them into a beautiful garden. He could have instructed Moses at Mt. Sinai to report his glory to the people of Israel. He chose instead to let them see and hear and smell his glory in the thunder, the lightning, the cloud and the trumpet blast. We do not usually think of lightning and thunder as art. Temple and tabernacle were art, as were their furnishings and utensils. God was the one who determined to use these artistic masterpieces to communicate his reality to intellect, emotion and will with grandeur, elegance and beauty. The stories Jesus told to illustrate the themes of his saving mission must also be classified as art.

Many other examples could be cited, but the point is clear. God himself, the creator of the divine word, communicates to the faith of his people by means of divine reality AND symbolic representation. That the reality remains primary does not lessen the value of art. Were the church to devalue art, it would be robbing God of a tool he himself has chosen to accentuate the reality of his word.

In the previous essay we reviewed the place of faith-wrought response in the believer. Here, too, art has a valuable function. A description of faith which speaks only of intellectual assent and willing obedience is incomplete. The first three fruits of the Spirit which Paul mentions in his letter to the Galatians are all emotions: "love, joy, peace." When feeling combines with knowledge and opportunity, the result, often as not, is art: David's songs, Moses' poetry, Solomon's temple, Paul's language. If the church were to undermine artistic expression, it would actually be disallowing what often flows from the deepest recesses of Christian faith, to say nothing of removing from its service that which affects the faith of others.

We get the impression from his writings that Luther would not have been all that interested in psychological observations. Like any student with a classic medieval education, Luther had his share of so-called music psychology courses. He studied the musical theories of the Greek philosophers, Plato, Aristotle

and Boethius. He understood that the prevailing musical point of view was guarded. Augustine, for example, became nervous every time he enjoyed music too much. The majority opinion in most of educated Europe seems to have been that music was a fairly inferior imitation of what the ancients called the "celestial music of the spheres," and something to be handled with great care and reserve.

Luther listened to these voices and even expressed a musical caution or two. But there were three things he knew: his Bible, himself and people. In all three he found a love and appreciation of music. In Scripture:

Thus it is not without reason that the fathers and the prophets wanted nothing else to be associated as closely with the word of God as music...(LW: 53, p. 323)

This is why the prophets did not make use of any art except music; when setting forth their theology they did it not as geometry, not as arithmetic, not as astronomy, but as music, so that they held theology and music most tightly connected, and proclaimed truth through psalms and song. (LW: 49, p. 428)

In himself:

My love for music, which often has quickened me and liberated me from great vexation, is abundant and overflowing. (LW: 49, p. 428)

Music is God's greatest gift. It has often so stimulated and stirred me that I felt the desire to preach. (*What Luther Says*, p. 982)

In people:

For whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate...what more effective means than music could you find. (LW: 53, p. 323)

I most heartily desire that music, that divine and precious gift, be praised and extolled before all people...Experience proves that, next to the Word of God, only music deserves being extolled as the mistress and governess of the feelings of the human heart. (St. Louis: XIV, p. 428; quoted in *WLQ*, Vol 83, No. 2, p. 104)

All this supplied ample evidence to Luther that music was not something to be feared but to be used. And the final justification—really, the most compelling—was his understanding that music was the good and gracious gift of God the creator, given to humanity that it might be used in God's praise and in the proclamation of the gospel.

The gift of language, combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming the Word of God through music and by providing sweet melodies with words. (LW: 53, p. 324)

In each of the preceding essays, we pointed to Luther as the originator or restorer of the worship principle which the essay discussed. Thus we have seen Luther's work in promoting the evangelical principle, the liturgical principle and the congregational principle. It is obvious from his writings that Luther viewed music as having an integral part in each of the three areas.

Only rarely did Luther talk about music which was not associated with the Word of God. He did not have the struggle with secular music we have. With that in mind one can understand why he wrote about the play of music on human emotions: this was music connected with scripture. It was the combination of the Word and music which impressed him so deeply. He never forgot that it was the reality of the Word which was the essence of proclamation. In 1543 he commented: "The Book of Psalms is a sweet and delightful song because it

sings of and proclaims the Messiah even when a person does not sing the notes but merely recites and pronounces the words.” But he saw the value of the addition of the art: “And yet the music, or the notes, which are a wonderful creation and gift of God, help materially in this, especially when the people sing along and reverently participate” (*LW*: 45, p. 273). This presupposition needs to be understood as we hear Luther saying not just about music but about all the arts: “The Gospel has been proclaimed richly and clearly; it has been emphasized masterfully and powerfully by the apostles; now it is announced everywhere by word of mouth and with the pen; it is written, sung, pictured, etc” (*LW*: 24, p. 404).

Luther considered music to be the *VIVA VOX EVANGELIUM*, the living voice of the gospel. Given his determination that corporate worship should have the proclamation of the beneficium as its primary function, it cannot surprise us that Luther was so interested in church music. But then, he was interested in anything that supported the gospel. "Let the mass be celebrated with vestments, with chants and all the usual ceremonies;" he wrote. (*LW*: 36, p. 254) He told Melancthon one evening: "It would be good to keep the whole liturgy with its music, omitting only the canon." (*LW*: 54, p. 360) Whatever besides the canon detracted from the gospel would have to go, too. “Alas, the words "service of God" has nowadays taken on so strange a meaning and usage that whoever hears it thinks not of the work of God, but rather of the ringing of bells, the wood and stone churches...” (*LW*: 21, p. 350). And he continues with a long list of the arts, including music!

With his attitudes clearly etched on our minds, Luther's commitment to pastoral chant, church motets, instrumental music and especially the congregational hymn makes perfect sense. Not many church leaders in 2000 years of history have been as committed to as wide an array of musical idioms as was Luther—and all for the sake of the gospel. It is interesting to note that of all Luther's vast literary and theological masterpieces, none continue to proclaim the gospel in today's world the way his hymns do, excepting, perhaps, the Small Catechism.

Luther was not much more committed to the evangelical principle than he was to the congregational principle and the liturgical principle, and so it follows that he would encourage the use of music in the carrying out of both ideals. In his 1988 publication, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise*, Carl Schalk (Concordia, River Forest) offers insights into Luther's musical contributions for the sake of these principles. What follows is an editing of Schalk's study.

Luther summarized his thoughts regarding worship, praise and singing in two succinct comments:

God does not demand great sacrifices or precious treasures of great price for his blessings. No, he asks for the easiest work of all, namely, to sing his praise. (*LW*: 14, p. 111)

The worship of the New Testament...is nothing else than song, praise, and thanksgiving. This is a unique song. God does not care for our sacrifices and works. He is satisfied with the sacrifice of praise. (*LW*: 17, p.72)

Thus, to sing and praise the Triune God for all that he has done for humanity, especially for his goodness revealed in Christ Jesus, is to proclaim the good and gracious will of God for them. To be silent about God's grace in Jesus Christ is no longer an option for the Christian. For believers to refuse to sing and speak about the faith that is within them is to show that they do not believe, according to Luther. He said:

God has cheered our hearts and minds through his Son, whom he gave for us to redeem us from sin, death and the devil. He who believes this earnestly cannot be quiet about it. But he must gladly and willingly sing and speak about it so that others may come and hear it. And whoever does not want to sing and speak of it shows that he does not believe and that he does not belong under the new and joyful testament. (*LW*: 53, p. 333)

No wonder Luther was so determined that the people should have some good songs to sing!

Although Schalk does not treat this issue in his book on Luther, it is here that we will pause for the question: Is the popular legend true that Luther selected tavern tunes so that the people could have some good songs to sing? I'm afraid the Christian rock and pop aficionados won't enjoy hearing the answer, but—the legend is not true. The fact is that Luther expressed unhappiness with secular music from time to time. He was, to a certain point, a musical sophisticate. Besides his superior musical training, he had fine musical ability. Johann Walther, organist at Torgau and a noted composer, was one of several accomplished musicians who took note of Luther's obvious talents. The reformer not only joined in the singing of involved medieval motets, but also composed at least one, probably more. He was interested enough in classical music to know who were the best European composers of his age and knowledgeable enough to criticize a few second-rate organists. He had a strong regard for Ambrose, Gregory, Prudentius, Sedulius and the other great poets and composers of the early church. The list of his "revised" hymns testifies to that high esteem.

But Luther was not only the church's champion, he was also the champion of the German people. For over 200 years a folk music had been developing in northern Europe which the common people, both middle and lower classes, knew and loved. By 1525 this folk music had its own lengthy traditions, although it was by no means the music of worship or of the classical community. The art form—the Meistersingers had seen to it that this was an art form—was decidedly different in style from Gregorian chant: it was rhythmic, it was in a major or minor key (actually in those modes which developed into our major/minor system), and it was repetitious. This last quality especially is what determined its popularity. A typical tune repeated the first two lines, offered a new idea in the third line and then returned to the germ of the opening phrases. The repetition of lines, called bars, gave the style its name: the barform chorale (Guess where the rumor began that Luther used tavern songs?!). What Luther did was add to the existing corpus of church music the old traditional songs of the people, much as the music of early American folk hymnody (e.g., the tunes from "The Sacred Harp") are being added to church music today. Luther was no musical rube. What he chose was time-tested, traditional and true.

Luther was committed to whatever was excellent and evangelical from the past, be it the people's past or the church's past. For this reason, as for other reasons, as we have seen, he chose to retain the church's liturgical form of worship. Here, too, he emphasized the use of music. Again, Carl Schalk's summary is excellent.

Although the Latin Mass was intended for use especially in those circumstances where richer musical resources were available and the German Mass where musical resources were more modest, both were sung services. Both services envision sung or chanted lessons, collects, the Creed, and similar elements of the service, and both envisioned in varying degrees the participation of a choir.

Luther's concern for a proper musical dress for the liturgy prompted him in 1525 to prevail on the elector to send two of the leading musicians of his court—Conrad Rupsch and Johann Walther—to Wittenberg to assist Luther in the preparation of the music for the German Mass. Walther's report that Luther himself composed the chants for the lessons, the Words of Institution, and the Sanctus hymn is confirmed by notes on a loose-leaf sheet on which Luther pointed out some principles that ought to be observed in music for the liturgy. Among these was a concern for largely syllabic treatment of the Introit Psalm and the need for new terminations for the chant melodies to conform more closely to the requirements of the German language.

Luther's careful concern about music for the liturgy is clear evidence of his desire that the liturgy continue to be sung, no matter how modest the musical resources might be. It is also evidence for his larger concern that the practice of a musical liturgy, the heritage that was Luther's as part of the Western tradition, be continued.

As for hymnody, it is a commonplace to observe that a great contribution of the Lutheran Reformation was the restoration of congregational singing. But what is usually less noted is that Luther's desire for the active participation of the congregation through hymnody was a result of his concern that the people participate actively in the singing of the liturgy. For much of Protestantism today hymns may best be described as general Christian songs loosely attached to worship, but for Luther the congregational hymn was a vehicle for involving the faithful in the singing of the liturgy.

It was no accident that among the most popular hymns of the early Reformation was a body of hymns associated with the Ordinary of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei). Thus, in Luther's view, when 16th-century Lutherans sang his Credo hymn ("We all believe in one true God"), they were not singing a barren and impoverished alternative, a poor second choice for the prose text of the Credo. They were in reality singing the Creed with a text and a musical vehicle specifically suited to the demands of congregational singing.

As one looks at the large body of hymnody associated with Luther's name, as well as much of the other hymnody of early Lutheranism, one is constantly amazed to note its origin in or close ties to the historic orders and its usefulness as a medium to enable the congregation to participate in the liturgy. Luther's hymns related to the Ordinary of the Mass, the hymns associated with the Propers, the many hymns intended for the offices of Matins and Vespers, the hymns celebrating the church year, and the hymns that developed in Lutheranism connected with the practice of the *de tempore* hymn (Hymn of the Day), all were vehicles to enable the congregation to participate in the historic liturgy, but now through a musical vehicle uniquely suited to the demands of group singing. Hymnody for Luther was not simply a means to enable the congregation to participate in worship in a more general sense. It was a means to enable the congregation to participate specifically in the liturgy of the Western rite, a tradition that he continued to uphold and affirm.

Even a cursory examination of 16th-century Lutheran hymnals confirms this point of view. The so-called "Babst hymnal" (1545)—perhaps the most complete, representative, and carefully edited Lutheran hymnal of the 16th century and the last hymnal for which Luther himself wrote the preface—clearly reflects this point of view in both its organization and its choice of hymns. Luther's own settings of the German *Te Deum* and the *Litany* point to the same conclusion.

So we have a summary of Martin Luther's contributions to the principle that Lutheran worship is appreciative of the arts. It is, of course, more accurate to say that Luther established the principle than that he contributed to it. In fact, it can be said without qualification that whatever is good about church music today, and also, in a certain sense, whatever is good about ecclesiastical art today, owes a debt of gratitude to Luther.

What is good about music and art in the church today?—and we ask this specifically as it concerns our own church body. The WELS, like other Lutheran bodies in North America, is still reaping the benefits from the Confessional Revival of the last century. As our pioneer leaders sniffed around for the brand of confessional Lutheranism they wanted, they came upon men and movements that were as determined to restore Luther's artistic principles as they were to resurrect his evangelical principles. It must be admitted that our close association with the Missouri Synod did much more than solidify our early confessionalism. Both before and after 1961 Missouri named the tune as far as our worship endeavors were concerned. Our organists and choir directors bought music from Concordia Publishing House, our music teachers studied at River Forest, our worship leaders attended conferences and committees manned by Missourians and our laypeople observed worship habits in Missouri Synod church more than in any other. I have no hesitation to say that this was a great blessing for us. In her prime Missouri was in every way the brightest light of Lutheranism since the Reformation and, although many in her midst have lost their commitment to doctrinal integrity, the artistic residuals of her past confessionalism continue to be felt. There have been a few in our circles who have exerted a measurable influence on us: John Koehler and Fritz Reuter, who trained a generation of students at the Seminary and in New Ulm to appreciate the Lutheran hymn and its attendant music; my predecessor at the Seminary, of whom a Synodical pundit has said, "He made a discussion of worship respectable in the WELS"; and for the last twenty years (and likely for the next fifty as well) Kurt Eggert. In my opinion these few alongside Missouri's influence are responsible for the good situation which exists today:

--The vast majority of our churches are worshiping by means of the historic rite of the western church and making good use of the church year;

--We have at our disposal in *The Lutheran Hymnal* a solid corpus of evangelical and orthodox hymnody. The organ and choir music which attends these hymns can be found in the music files of most WELS congregations;

- The romantic organ and the Hammond-type electronic, so common in the first half of this century in our churches and so unsuited for anything resembling Lutheran worship, are slowly but steadily being replaced by classically-voiced pipe organs and very good electronic imitations;
- The use of brass and woodwind instruments is increasing in popularity;
- In at least a few congregations there is a growing interest in tapestry, parament and banner art of good quality;
- Any number of our churches have worked to overcome artistic cliches (and this what we called "opaque" art) and have encouraged architectural originality, e.g., the student chapel in Madison and St. John Church in Baraboo;
- There is some evidence that old church buildings are reclaiming their gothic beauty which first the years destroyed and then was compromised by well-intended remodeling efforts for the sake of "blond modern" and other considerations. For example, Grace Church in Milwaukee has pedestaled its pulpit again and rebuilt the splendid oak canopy which was part of the original chancel in 1900;
- Finally—and obviously I can't be totally objective about this—there is on our Hymnal Committee a determination that our new worship book will possess an artistic integrity. We are concerned not only with good words, but also with good language, good style and good music.

All of these examples indicate that there is in our synod a good commitment to use art for the sake of the gospel in worship and to use good art.

You will raise the question anyway, even if I don't, so I will: What is good art? Because it is an imprecise representation of reality and because it has much to do with individual background and emotions, art is always subjective to a degree, as we have pointed out. There is an old rule of thumb that "there is no mawkish anthem or organ voluntary but that somebody has thought it beautiful." With that in mind, is it possible to define what is good in art?

To a degree it is possible. We are simply compelled to listen to the voice of the experts. I know nothing about cars; I lift the hood as little as I have to. All that concerns me is that, on a good day, the car will get me from here to there. But if my auto mechanic brother-in-law tells me (as will most of his fellow mechanics) that a BMW is a better car than a YUGO, I ought not scoff at him, despite the fact that either car will get me where I want to go and even though some people are sold on the YUGO. In the same way, art is not just a matter of immediate effect or of personal taste; it also has to do with rightness, propriety and craftsmanship. In society and also in the church these days, there is too much striving for a quick emotionalism and too much contentment with what is fast and easy. We can recognize what effect these trends have on preaching and programism. We must be careful to note how they also affect art and music. Whatever the form of communication, cheap sensationalism does not bear lasting fruit. The experts can help us avoid what is cheap and sensational. For the same reason Luther sought out the advice of the experts as he prepared the music for his German service.

Of course, the voice of the non-expert needs to be heard, too. His tastes are not unimportant and his weaknesses dare not be carelessly shoved aside. But our American Lutherans need to be pointed to a higher ground, to what is solid, proper and lasting. And we will not be able to point them in the right direction unless we, too, are willing to aspire to the best in artistic expression.

To do anything less is bad communication and bad stewardship. The proclamation of the gospel demands the best we can give, not only in the art of verbal communication but in the other arts, too. It is one thing to give less than the best when such is all that can be brought; it is another thing to give less than the best with purpose and planning. The author of an article in *Christianity Today* wrote:

God knows when a performance is diligently prepared or carelessly thrown together. That he not only accepts but even desires our imperfect sacrifices is a wonder of his love and grace. We abuse his generosity when we presume that anything we bring to him, regardless of its condition,

must be received with gratitude. (*Christianity Today*, "The God Who Sings," July 15, 1983, p. 19-20)

On the other hand, it should not be thought that the best art is German or Lutheran or 18th century. A recent issue of *Time* included an article on Christian art in Africa. Even an untrained eye can see how art and architecture are flourishing under the influence of the gospel. Anglicanism developed English hymnody in a high art form and its style is one we have come to love. The observation that there is a great deal of trash being passed off as "modern art" does not change the fact that some contemporary artists are producing work which Paul Bunjes would say "bears the accent of the eternal." The American rhythm and blues heritage is already affecting church music and this is good. Such a careful ordering of the people's tradition is certainly an imitation of what Luther did with German folk music. To look beyond the golden age of Lutheranism is not necessarily the disavowal of a commitment to seek what is good in art.

This essayist will not presume to bore you with what he feels is wrong with our commitment to art for the sake of the gospel. Let the following advice be enough for now:

--We need to review consistently the place of art in the communication of the gospel. Such a review will solidify our determination to use the arts as God would have us use them. Our great example is Luther himself.

--We must be advised of and cautioned against the challenges of contemporary iconoclasts and emotionalistic Evangelicals. There are too many sons of Luther aping Calvin's artistic attitudes and even Evangelicals decry the hedonistic artistry of their comrades.

--We need to encourage those among us who are artistically talented in the same way we encourage pastors and teachers: to search for them and give them role models when they are young, offer financial help for their training, praise them for their accomplishments and provide resources for the use of their abilities. I wonder how many young artists (perhaps old ones, too!) we have lost to other interests and other church bodies because they have perceived that their church had little use for their gifts.

The subject of the arts in Lutheran worship might fill five essays by itself. The issue sinks too quickly to pleadings and cajoling. Wilhelm Loehe, of Frankenmuth fame, summarized this author's opinion well when he wrote:

The Church remains what she is even without a Liturgy, she remains a queen even in beggar's rags. It is better to give up everything else and to hold only the pure doctrine than to go about in the pomp and glory of splendid services that are without light and life because the doctrine has become impure. It is not necessary to let the Church go in beggar's rags. Much better it is that her prayers, her hymns, her sacred order, the holy thoughts of her Liturgy, should be impressed upon her people. (quoted in *The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 18)

It is this power to impress and suggest the gospel on the hearts of God's people that makes art so valuable a servant in Lutheran worship.

V. Lutheran Worship Is Pastoral

When it finally came to Luther in 1514 or 1515 that the essence of God's relationship with man was to be found in the doctrine of justification, the entire Roman system—in fact, the way of life of the whole western world—began to tumble like a row of dominoes. First the theology of merit, then, in short order, the sacrifice of the Mass, the seven sacraments, the priestly office, and the subordination of the laity and the state to the church

all crumbled. Everything was affected, the church, the state, society, under the doctrine that God declares sinners righteous for Jesus' sake.

Nothing was affected more by this teaching than corporate worship. The doctrine of justification literally turned worship upside down. No longer was corporate primarily something man offered to God, but something God offered to man. No longer did the people need a priest through whom they could gain access to God. As justified saints and priests themselves they could bring their prayers and praises directly before the throne of grace. No longer was the church's liturgical way of worship only a glittering stage production which the people watched in confused fear. Freed from papal chains they could participate in song and ceremony with eagerness and joy. After a thousand years of bondage Christians could once again come to church to hear about grace which was free and could then freely respond in their worship. That God deserves our thanks for this gift is obvious; that Luther was God's man to present that gift to us ought to be obvious from all our previous study.

As Luther rediscovered this freedom for the common man, he did not disallow or devalue the office of the pastor or the public ministry of which the pastor is a part. It is true that he carefully pointed out that the offices of the ministry are derived from the church and its universal priesthood. He certainly clarified the divine call and the congregation's right to participate in it. Without a doubt he condemned pastors who abused their office and rights. But neither his cautions nor his clarifications eliminated the necessity of the pastor. In defending a pastor in the town of Creuzburg in 1543, Luther wrote:

I certainly hope you will have enough Christian understanding to know that the ministry of the Gospel is neither our property nor the property of any human being, not even an angel. It belongs to God, our Lord, who has purchased it with his blood, and has given and instituted it for our salvation. (*What Luther Says*, p. 926)

Luther understood that there were those in the newly-reformed churches who wondered (and even wished) that the office of pastor might be eliminated as the office of priest had been. Luther responded:

The devil, who has taken possession of you, moves you to say this...If our Lord had known that the ministry is unnecessary, he certainly would have been wise and prudent enough not to have Moses preach to you. (*What Luther Says*, p. 1109)

It is obvious from any reading in Luther that he valued the pastoral ministry highly. It was, of course, the function of that office which made the ministry valuable. The pastor was the proclaimer of God's message of law and gospel. But it was more than just the message which made the ministry so vital. The manner in which the pastor spoke the message was also important. The pastor was to be a "real shepherd and keeper of souls—a Seelsorger" (*What Luther Says*, p. 931) who found not only his message but also his motive and his methods in the Savior. "Men who hold the office of the ministry," he said in a sermon, "should have the heart of a mother toward the church" (*What Luther Says*, p. 932). He also wrote, "A pastor must combine feeding and fending"—that is pasturing and protecting. (*What Luther Says*, p. 935) This lengthy quotation from his *Treatise on Keeping Children in School* (1530) supplies adequate evidence that Luther saw the role of the pastor to be more than just the preacher.

Note also how a minister serves God and how splendid are the sacrifice and the service he offers God. Through his office and Word are sustained the kingdom of God, the true faith and knowledge of Christ, the gifts, the work, the power of the Holy Spirit, the right use of Baptism and the other Sacrament, the pure, true teaching of the Gospel, the right way to discipline and crucify the body, and many similar matters. And who could sufficiently praise any one of these just enumerated? And, in addition to this, how much is still to be said of the service he renders by keeping up the fight against the devil, the world, and carnal wisdom and ideas, by the many victories he gains, by the many errors he refutes, by the many heresies he rebuffs? For he must

battle against the gates of hell and must win his victories from the devil. (*What Luther Says*, p. 936)

The very fact that Luther laid such emphasis on preaching and that he determined to continue the use of a liturgical form of worship is strong enough evidence of how he felt about the pastor's role in corporate worship. He certainly desired to give the people more to do, but he did not care to give the pastor less to do. Had Luther espoused any anti-clerical opinions, corporate worship—and certainly the German form of it—would have been the place to put theory into practice. He even had several models to follow: the Anabaptists were not much inclined to a clergy-led worship and already in 1521 Carlstadt had conducted a service without the vestments which marked the office of the pastor. But there is scarcely anything I could find in Luther's writings (save the "formless" rite he considered for awhile) which indicates that he harbored any thoughts at all of eliminating the pastor's leadership role. On the other hand, there is a great deal which simply assumes that function.

All this states the obvious as far as we WELS pastors are concerned. Of all the various orders of service around these days, I know of no form for corporate worship being used in the WELS which does not assume a leader, nor do I know of any practice which anticipates that the leader is not, except in cases of necessity, the pastor. We are not much influenced by the Quakers or the Charismatics. One hears, perhaps, a certain uneasiness expressed from time to time about the pronunciation of the **absolvo te** on the Absolution or about speaking prayers on behalf of the congregation. There are a few odd practices around that flow from a pastoral hesitancy to turn his back to his congregation and every once in awhile someone asks why pastors should be vested when they lead the service. But in the main we understand the office of the pastor well and find our role as worship leader to be comfortable and natural.

In fact, we may have found our role as worship leader to be too comfortable and natural, so much so that we have been unable to catch sometimes the full implications of what it means to be a worship leader. It is a relatively easy task to lead a liturgical service. The ordinary of the service is fairly constant; the proper changes week by week but, except for the hymns, its parts have been pre-determined for us. It takes very little effort to make the service "go." In this respect sermon, Bible class and marriage counseling and a host of other tasks are different. Without intense preparation on the part of the pastor these others will not occur. Both the ease with which the service can be led and the demands on pastors' schedules contribute to his inability to grasp or his unwillingness to grapple with what it means to be a worship leader.

There are several other factors which contribute to this problem. We have a strange inheritance, you and I. Theologically we are a long ways removed from Pietism, but, at least in attitude toward worship, we are all the sons of Pietistic forebearers. We have inherited from our spiritual fathers, as they did from theirs, a deep distrust of ceremony and ritual. As we have seen, it is not from Luther and the Confessions that we have derived those attitudes. Attached to this sociological makeup is the fact that we are deeply committed to Lutheran orthodoxy and all its objective magnificence. We rightly despise Pietistic enthusiasm and stand constantly on guard lest emotionalism enter our circles and services. This dual heritage has brought us great blessings. Because of our Pietistic roots we are primarily preachers; because of our orthodox commitment we are doctrinal preachers. But this combination has also been detrimental. Our pietistic orientation has made us disinclined to a full use of what impressed orthodoxy on the hearts of Luther's people, i.e., ceremony, ritual, art and serious church music. Our orthodox orientation has kept us from fully enjoying one of the strengths of early pietism, its commitment to speeding the message of the gospel to the heart and its emotional response to the word. By God's grace we have avoided in our synod the excesses of both Pietism and Orthodoxy. But to God's chagrin, I think, we have inherited only half of the best of both movements. And the place where this lack becomes most apparent is in our leadership of corporate worship. It happens too often in our circles that, as long as the word is preached (that's Pietism) and as long as it is preached correctly (that's Orthodoxy), we conclude that the objective of corporate worship has been met. As I have tried to show in these essays, this is not Luther, nor the Confessions nor the Scriptures. It is an enduring emphasis of Lutheran worship that the pastor, as the leader of

the worship of God's people, uses and leads his people to use all of God's gifts for the gospel's clearest proclamation and the church's most joyful praise.

If we have failed to use everything God has given us for and in corporate worship, this has not been an intentional failure. Perhaps it is better to say that this has been a well-intended failure. Finally, we cannot escape our roots. The devil has had much to do with this problem as well. He is the one who has led many notable Lutheran worship activists down liberal and ecumenical pathways and trapped much of Christianity in the muck of subjective emotionalism. He is also the one who occasionally has narrowed our vision so that we have perceived that to emphasize worship is to de-emphasize preaching and that to value what is affective (i.e., aimed at the emotions) is to minimize the value of what is cognitive (i.e., aiming at the intellect). (This perception, by the way, has not only affected our worship but our preaching and teaching, too.) Although these fears are honestly aroused and resultant attitudes are honestly intended, they have meant the loss of much of what is good and valuable in worship's proclamation and praise.

Can we worship leaders reclaim, for ourselves and our people, all the best God has given for proclamation and praise? I submit that we can—with some honest effort.

We need to begin by admitting that not all our attitudes about the word and its working are rooted in the word itself, but rather are the legacy of our traditions. We are what we eat, the saying goes, and not everything which has found its way to our table and plate has been wholesome. We surely want to know the difference between the doctrine of the Word and a caricature of the doctrine of the Word. We need to read Luther and the Confessions less selectively.

Certainly you have discovered that one can quote Luther to defend a host of aberrant theological viewpoints. The neo-orthodox quote him to support gospel-reductionism; the Pietists quoted him to justify a four-times-a-year communion practice. We can quote the Confessions to condemn saints days and to commend them, to reject the notion that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice (of merit) and to accept the notion that it is a sacrifice (of thanksgiving). The point is not that Luther and the Lutheran fathers are unclear, but that they need to be read in a balanced way. Too often we have used Luther to justify practices which Luther never practiced and have labeled as Romanish customs which Luther observed his entire ministry. Balanced reading leads to a balanced practice in worship.

We need to face the reality of what happens at worship. There are miracles which occur on Sunday morning. There is the miracle of the word working through the water in baptism, in the body and blood of Christ being present with the bread and wine in the Supper, in the way the Means of Grace come to bear on human hearts, in the fact that sinners turned saints respond to God with thanksgiving and praise. Can we approach the altar on Sunday morning with anything less than profound amazement at what God is about to do with our lips and hands and eyes and smiles and frowns? Is it possible for us to walk out of the sacristy with a gigantic "Wow" in our hearts?

If it is possible, then we are going to display a godly and obvious enthusiasm as we lead the service. Our people need to see that we have been touched by the gospel and torched to bring our praise to God. Remaining in the sacristy during the hymns loses a golden opportunity to display godly enthusiasm. So does a lifeless recitation of the Absolution and Benediction. Both of these forms hold the most wonderful of God's pronouncements and people ought to see in our faces and hear in our voices that we consider them to be such. The lessons for Sunday are surely a proclamation of the gospel, but if the reading of them is ill-prepared and poorly performed, not even the congregation's reading along will overcome the compromise which has been effected. There is no place in our leadership for giddyness or jocularity. We are not running commercials in church; worship leaders are not cheerleaders. Nor are they undertakers. When it comes to the divine word, actions do not speak louder than words, but actions do speak. The leader of worship owes to the word and to the people the resolve to lead with a controlled and dignified joy and enthusiasm.

In order to gain that resolve we need to come to a realistic understanding of our role as leader. WELS pastors have a well-developed concept of servant ministry. We place ourselves under the word, under Christ and under the congregation. The word is the treasure, we are the jars of clay; we must decrease, Christ must increase; we are the servants of the church. Understanding all that, the man who aspires to the office of pastor

does well to be humble about his person. But when we step into the chancel to lead the worship service, we are not assuming a role which we have claimed for ourselves, but which God and the congregation have given us. We do not need to be tentative, shy or embarrassed about what others have called us to do. In the role of worship leader we stand as the vice-regent of the King acting in the public courts of the King's domain. Both the speaking for God to the people and the speaking to God for the people require a godly majesty and a powerful dignity. We need not hesitate to exalt in this role we hold by divine call. Luther wrote: "This is not vainglory, but a necessary glorying, because he [the minister] is glorying, not in himself but in the king who sent him, whose authority he desires to have honored and held in high respect" (*What Luther Says*, p. 925). C.S. Lewis wrote in a similar vein:

Above all, you [ministers] must be rid of the hideous idea, fruit of a widespread inferiority complex, that pomp on the proper occasion has any connection with vanity or self-conceit. A celebrant approaching the altar, the princess led out by a king to dance a minuet, a general officer on ceremonial parade...—all these wear unusual clothes and move with calculated dignity. This does not mean they are vain, but that they are obedient: they are obeying the **hoc age** which presides over every solemnity. (*A Preface to Paradise Lost*, p. 17)

Pomp and pageantry in corporate worship are not the same as pomposity and ostentation. The latter are fake and obviously so. The former are fitting when the almighty God comes to meet people and people come to meet him.

We have suggested that a proper understanding of "pomp on the proper occasion" will affect our resolve to lead worship with a dignified joy. It will affect other attitudes as well. It will affect the way we speak and walk and move and dress. It will affect our goals for educational emphases, for the music ministry and for the care and appointment of the church building. It will affect the attitude of our people who will come to see that their pastor considers the time spent at worship to be of utmost value for them and for himself and that what is happening at corporate worship make it the most important event of the week.

Given the example of some pastors, it is little wonder that some people treat worship so casually. The pastor comes to church in cardigan sweater and penny loafers, moves in the chancel as though he's walking to the backyard barbecue pit, carries the service book like a loaf of bread, gives mid-service directions as though he's supervising a grade school volleyball game and after the service allows his children to run around in the chancel as though it were the parsonage family room. And all this is defended for the sake of the universal priesthood and the contemporary American scene! In reality, it betrays the universal priesthood and is nothing but a concession to anti-authoritarian America.

There needs to be a balance in all this. The pastor need not be dower to be dignified, gleeful to be enthusiastic, or casual to be genuine. We can indeed be genuine, enthusiastic and dignified at the same time, but we will need to be self-analytical if we are to achieve that balance. Self-analysis does not come easy for men who make a career of representing a God who is always right. It is a misstep which comes easily to claim for our procedures the same kind of rightness we claim for God's. When this happens in worship, we begin to do "the rite thing for the rote reason." Nothing save heresy inflicts greater injury on corporate worship than the leader's refusal or reluctance to review, analyze and correct, to challenge existing attitudes and to grow in new perspectives. There is no part of pastoral responsibility in which you and I have attained complete growth and that includes leadership in corporate worship. Let's ask for and listen to the comments and critique of our wives, perceptive lay people, choir directors and organists. The arrival of a new hymnal will surely assist in this analysis. We will be obligated to rethink how we say things because we will be saying new things. But there will be more in the new book than revisions of existing forms. There will also be new forms and new procedures which will require us to take a close look not only at our actions but also our attitudes.

I hear your moans and groans and I can identify with them. The last thing today's frenetic pastoral schedules need is the news that the last bastion of easy preparation, worship leadership, is about to become work. The reality is, it should have been work before and, for many of you, it was. It takes work to do the best

in any area of ministry, whether it be preaching, teaching, disciplining, counseling, evangelizing, administrating, etc. It also takes work to do the best in worship.

To do the best also takes a clear understanding of the objective of corporate worship. In that one hour on Sunday morning the pastor evangelizes, teaches, disciplines, and counsels all at the same time. But his primary objective is to inspire believers. Corporate worship assumes that most of the people who attend are people of faith: they know something of Christ, they feel something toward Christ and they are willing something for Christ. These believers come to worship to have their knowledge solidified, their emotions clarified and their will fortified. To touch the whole being of these believers the church gathers all of God's forces: word, baptism, Lord's Supper, sermon, lessons, hymns, chant, liturgy, church year, church music, art, symbolism, ceremony and ritual. All these make up a mighty army which stand ready to spring into action on Sunday morning. The worship leader is the strategist who moves the divisions for optimum advantage. The Holy Spirit is the power by which they all move to affect the believer's mind and heart.

To derive the best advantage from all these corporate worship forces takes the abilities of many people besides the pastor himself. I want to stress two areas in which the leader needs to take an active role: planning for worship and training worship assistants.

There are many people in our congregations who are willing and eager to assist in worship leadership: organists, choir directors, altar guild members, ushers, church secretaries, instrumentalists and custodians. If all these people are to serve to the best of their ability, they need time to prepare just like we pastors do. Your noticing that they have never seemed to prepare before may have more to do with your planning than their inclinations. One of the great benefits of a liturgical form of worship is that advance planning can be a relatively easy affair. I used to set aside several hot August days to map out the worship schedule for the year. (My office was air conditioned; I hope yours is, too!) I have attached a copy of the form I used to the end of this essay. A quick trip through the calendar and lectionary allows all the lessons, the sermon text and the psalm and gradual (or Verse) to be noted. A sermon theme is premature, but a general service focus is not. Because of their more general nature and function, the hymns before the sermon can also be chosen. Invariably I consulted *Lutheran Worship's* Hymn of the Day list. I also sought the input of the organist and choir director on the selection of these hymns so that we might encourage a wide use of choral concertatoes, i.e., hymn settings for congregation and choir participation which usually included the use of instruments. We were also able to slot in festival events such as Mission Festival, Stewardship and Christian Education Sundays, etc. All this information was placed into a loose-leaf notebook and placed at a convenient location for all the others who were involved in worship. All I had to do as the year went along was write my sermon and choose the hymn after it. You may be amazed to discover that your worship assistants are overjoyed to be able to work with this planning concept. I found that easy August planning made for excellent November and March worship. You will likely be overjoyed to know that a worship leaders manual, scheduled for publication with the new hymnal, will offer much help for service planning.

Some worship assistants will not be able to offer much advice or even think about advance planning without training. This is another task we pastors need to take seriously. I dream of the day when pastors spend as much time working with church musicians as they do training Sunday School teachers. I also dream of the day when the Commission on Worship will offer as many excellent tools as the Board for Parish Education does. Hopefully *Focus On Worship* will serve adequately until that day arrives. In some cases you may want to implement a systematic study of *A Handbook of Church Music*. Carl Schalk is the editor of this outstanding worship primer and both you and your church musicians would benefit if you and they would study it together. The handbook and its companion volume, *Key Words in Church Music* deserve to be on hand as resource material as surely as Franzmann's new commentaries do.

The more we pastors plan ahead and work to train the more we will be able to overcome the bad blood which sometimes exists between pastors and church musicians. We are often a source of frustration to many concerned musicians. They resent our apparent fixation with our sermon and our seeming disinterest in the other aspects of worship. Some are discouraged about the reality that, even after many years of specialized and expensive training, they receive a comparatively paltry remuneration for their services. In some congregations

they rightly ask why many more dollars are set aside for glittering kitchens, athletic facilities and textbook series than for music budgets and adequate worship instruments—and why money seems to be spent more often to deaden live acoustics than to enliven dead acoustics. Some ask why a system cannot be developed whereby church musicians are made available to the church for part-time service. Presently, the only regular way to advise the church of this willingness is to study for and then present oneself for a call as an elementary school teacher. The fact is that many church musicians would rather be bank tellers and musicians than teachers and musicians. Perhaps Wisconsin Lutheran College can find a way to certify church musicians and make them available to our congregations. When that day arrives pastors will have to take the lead to show congregations that others besides parish school teachers are qualified (perhaps more qualified) to assist in a ministry of music.

The point of all this is that we have many people in our synod who are willing to serve who are confused and discouraged by our pastoral attitudes. It goes without saying that they sometimes need to learn to serve with a pastoral heart and to see the total picture of the Christian ministry. Many of our teachers need to develop the same attitudes. But leadership includes listening to the voices of those we lead. They have much to offer us. They tend not to be so pragmatic as we pastors are and, sometimes, we could use a dose of their idealism.

There is no denying that the cost of leadership is high. Whether it is carried on in the home, in business, in the church generally or in worship, leadership takes work, time and effort. The pastor, by his call from God and the congregation, finds himself as the leader of corporate worship, not only in activity, but also in model, planning and training. This has been our emphasis and, under God, will remain one of the enduring emphases of Lutheran worship.

The Commission on Worship knows the schedule of today's pastors. Four of its members are or have been pastors themselves. Therefore, you can expect that our new hymnal will be pastor-friendly. We are planning to produce materials which will offer a great deal of help as you introduce the new book. I have mentioned already the worship leaders' manual which will offer, besides helps for worship planning, a rationale and explanation for every step in every service and rite as well as a set of essays which will deal with many of the issues we have discussed in these lectures. As the Lord gives us opportunity, time and energy, a number of us on the Commission and on the Hymnal Committee are determined to supply study guides, Bible class courses and video tapes for worship education of lay people. We can supply the resources, we can produce the forms, but we cannot change attitudes. That remains the task of each pastor as he contemplates his role as the leader of God's people at worship.

Conclusion

Lutheran worship in its purest and highest form, its basis found in the commands and examples and Scripture and its principles established by Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, deserves to be retained and, in some ways, reclaimed by the Lutheran Church of the 21st century. This worship is distinctive from that of all other Christian denominations. Lutheran worship is **evangelical** insofar as it presumes that the Christian's highest worship is to hear and believe the gospel. It is **congregational** insofar as it understands that the body of Christ has direct access to God in prayer, praise and confession. It is **liturgical** insofar as it employs those customs of the ancient church in an ever revitalized form which bind the present church to focus on the objective truths of the word of God. It is **appreciative of the arts** insofar as it grasps God's creation of mankind and God's own use of symbol and song to touch hearts and minds with the message of his love. It is **pastoral** insofar as it recognizes the role of the shepherd to lead the worship, both the proclamation and the praise, of God's people. Finally, Lutheran worship is important, perhaps more important to our people than to us, likely more important to our people than we suppose, and certainly more important to our people than they suppose. Because it is, it demands the best we have to give.

Permit me to close with a quotation I used at the end of the first essay. As I said then, it summarizes perfectly the attitude we WELS pastors ought to take to Lutheran worship.

The Lutheran Church has a rich legacy to offer in its worship. Here is reality, not symbolism. Here we have real contact with God; not as we come to him but as he comes to us. He meets us in the proclamation of the Word. Here the Son of God distributes his actual body and blood for the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. Here the people of God gather to offer him their thanks, their praise and their prayer. This is the real thing!

It's time for a new initiative in worship. People are longing for God. Where are they going to find him? In the shifting sands of the inner life or on the solid rock of the word of his gospel? How are they to offer him their thanks and praise? With trivial methods borrowed from the entertainment industry or in worship forms which focus on the praise of God's gracious glory? This is the kind of worship that lifts the heart while it exalts Christ! And this is what Lutheran worship does.

Service Planning Guide

Date _____ Day of Church Year _____

1st Lesson and emphasis

2nd Lesson and emphasis

Gospel and emphasis

Sermon text

Focus of the Day

Psalm of the Day (introit)
performance

Prayer of the Day

Verse of the Day
performance

Song of Praise (replacement for Gloria)

Opening Hymn

Hymn of the Day

Sermon Hymn (Distribution)

Closing Hymn

Choral Concerto

Service 8:00 _____ 10:30 _____

Organist

Choir 8:00 _____ 10:30 _____

Anthem 8:00 _____ 10:30 _____

Special additions

Liturgical Color